



SPRING | Plants

Seed Sprouting: Step 1

Summary:

A packet of seeds is a packet full of possibility, but we can't always be sure that the seeds are fertile. Seed sprouting gives us a chance to make sure our seeds are viable and gives them a head start in the cool spring months. Today, we'll plant and sprout a few seeds to see which plants have more success.

Before Visiting the Garden:

Gather: Ruler, shovel, vegetable seeds, paper towels, plastic baggie, water, and a marker

Explore: Seed portraits by Linda Paulsen: Can you count the different varieties of seeds she uses? How do they affect the texture?

Read: *The Empty Pot* by Demi

In the Garden:

Preparing a garden takes a little time and planning. While you can just stick a seed in the ground and hope for the best, gardens do much better when we give plants and seeds the best chance of success. Most gardeners start planning which seeds they want to grow in late winter, thumbing through catalogues and dreaming of dirt and green plants even when the ground is still covered in snow.

Questions to Explore:

- When you look at this seed, can you tell if it will grow?
- Do you think all seeds turn into plants?
- Can you devise an experiment to determine which seeds will grow?
- What do you think this seed needs to get started growing?
- How should we prepare our soil?
- Can you turn it over with your shovel to loosen any chunks and remove rocks?
- Is there compost or potting soil in the garden? Can you mix a bit into the soil so the seed has food to eat?

Activity:

1. Our garden in early spring doesn't look like much. The leaves on the trees may have buds, but green is hard to find.
2. Take a few moments to walk around the garden and locate the area where you would like to plant your seeds. How much room do you have?
3. Look at the back of the seed packet and see how much room each sprout will need and use your ruler to determine how many seeds you can plant in that area.
4. After you have prepared the soil, read the back of the seed packet for any additional information about your vegetable. When sowing directly into the ground, it is best to sow in rows so we can see what grew and where!
5. Create a little trough with your shovel in a line then drop seeds along the row. Gently cover with dirt, water, and wait.
6. Depending on the seed type, it could be a few weeks before you see growth but remember to keep coming back to water and weed around your seeds.
7. After planting in the ground, open your seed packet and gather your other materials. Gently lay 1-3 seeds on a square of paper towel.
8. Fold one side of the towel over the seeds and dampen (avoid soaking) the paper towel with a spray bottle.
9. Put the paper towel inside a clear plastic baggie and seal.
10. Label the name of the plant and the date on the front of the bag. Take the seed home and place it in a warm sunny spot.
11. Check in on your seed, tracking your observations. When roots appear, check the weather to make sure there is no danger of frost and bring your seed back to the garden to be planted in its designated spot.
12. Keep track in your journal following the garden seeds and the seeds you're sprouting. Record when you first see roots or shoots. Which group did you observe a change in first? Which group was the most successful?



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Beyond the Garden | Get to Know Your Local Meteorologist

Visit a local museum that includes a weather exhibit. Talk to museum workers about some of the ways that other meteorologists predict the weather. If there is not a museum exhibit available, ask to visit a local news station and talk with the weathermen and women about their experiences forecasting the weather. How do they use the information they've learned from the weather to plan and prep their gardens?

Continue Exploring | Supporting Materials

Young Meteorologist resources: <http://youngmeteorologist.org/Beyond the Garden | Whichever Way the Worm Turns>

When we think about the growing season, we often think of sunny, summer days, but for most gardeners, preparing for summer starts many months before the days become long and warm. Take a trip to your local greenhouse and talk to the staff about what happens behind the scenes as greenhouses prepare for summer.

Continue Exploring | Supporting Materials

Greenhouse gardening resources: <http://www.kidsgardening.org/node/1004>