



SPRING | Soil Sensations Exploring the Feel of Soil

Summary:

Soil comes in all types: sandy, rocky, clay, wet, dry, hot, and everything in between. Tiny gardeners will explore the sensory aspects of soil through touch, sound, and careful observation.

Before Visiting the Garden:

Gather: One scoopful of sand, clay (available at a craft store), and rocks, a shovel, water bottle, clear plastic container or recycled spice jar, old pie pans

Explore: The garden! Look up: Rivers and Tides by Andy Goldsworthy (images available here: <http://visualmelt.com/Andy-Goldsworthy>)

Read: *Planting a Rainbow* by Lois Elhert

In the Garden:

The best way to explore a garden is to use your whole body! As your tiny gardener explores their environment, talk to them about the things they are seeing and give them words they may not yet have to describe what they are experiencing.

Take a handful of soil from the garden bed. Squeeze it.

Observations:

- What does it feel like?
- Can you smell it?
- What do you see in the soil?
- When you squish it, does it make any noise?

Questions to Explore:

- What do you think a seed needs to grow?
- Describe a handful of the soil in this garden.
- Compare the soil to the different items we brought with us. What do you notice?
- Can you point to where you would plant a seed?

Activity:

1. Set up a few different ways for your gardener to explore the materials you brought. Using the pie pans, you can create stations for comparing wet material vs. dry material.
2. Add a bit of soil medium to your clear containers to give your gardener the opportunity to look more closely at the medium as well as to shake the bottle to see if the soil makes noise!
3. Provide your gardener with a shovel and allow them to scoop, dig, and drag a bit of the soil—they're working great core muscles that will help with all sorts of skill development.
4. Ask your gardener if they can stack the rocks to build a tower.
5. After plenty of time for exploration, you can revisit some of the questions above to see if your gardener would choose a different soil to plant their seed into or if they would stick with their original idea.

Beyond the Garden | Creating a Seed Explosion

Take the clear bottles of soil, rocks, sand, and clay home with you. As you go, look around the neighborhood and invite your gardener to see if they can find a rock, or some sand along the way.

- Does the rock in the landscaping make a different noise than the one in your jar?
- Is it bigger or smaller?

You can also find a piece of music your gardener enjoys and help them find a rhythm with their sand shaker.



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Continue Exploring | Supporting Materials

Find a state park to explore your local habitat further: Visit your state's Department of Natural Resources website for details
Make Sticky Sand: Add approximately 3 cups sand to 1 can of shaving cream. Mix and explore!