Summer Unit

Growing the Garden

JUNE – Roots and Shoots
JULY – Water and Bugs
AUGUST – Vegetables & Composting
# Summer Unit

## “Growing the Garden”

### June Theme “Roots and Shoots”

| Week 1 | What makes plants grow?  
|        | What are the parts of a plant?  
|        | What will we find in the garden?  
|        | Why are vegetables important in our diet?  
|        | Vegetable tasting  
|        | Read “Roots” by Vijaya Bodach |

| Week 2 | Watering our indoor plants  
|        | Taking pictures of our garden  
|        | Show and tell a favorite book about gardening or vegetables  
|        | Why are vegetables important in our diet?  
|        | Vegetable tasting  
|        | Read “Roots” by Vijaya Bodach |

| Week 3 | What vegetables are roots?  
|        | List/chart what has started sprouting in the garden  
|        | Act like a vegetable  
|        | Why are vegetables important in our diet?  
|        | Vegetable tasting  
|        | Read “Jack’s Garden” by Henry Cole |

| Week 4 | How tall will the vegetables get?  
|        | Tell me your favorite thing to do in the garden  
|        | Bring in a picture of another garden you’ve seen  
|        | Why are vegetables important in our diet?  
|        | Vegetable tasting  
|        | Read “Jack’s Garden” by Henry Cole |
June “Roots and Shoots”

Background for Teachers
This month your children will be learning all about things that they will be finding in the garden. By this time, outdoor planting should be well underway, and there should be some exciting things popping up indoors as well! The focus this month is “Roots and Shoots” which is an introduction into the growth process. Your children will be learning about what makes the seeds they’ve planted actually grow and help give them the tools necessary to start identifying and classifying the plants.

Monthly Goals
The summer unit is very hands-on and June in particular is the time to really help your children get excited about the growing process. Our goals are to teach them how and why vegetables grow, what they can do to help the vegetables grow, and to get them excited about seeing and tasting the final products!
Dear Family,

This month's theme is “Roots and Shoots” and is the first focus of our summer unit, “Growing the Garden.” For the past few weeks your child has been learning about seeds, tools, and the planting process. This month we are hoping to start seeing some progress both in our indoor gardens and our outdoor garden so we can begin our in-depth discovery of how things grow.

Each week during this month, we will be reading a new book that will help the children connect the ideas we've been learning about. We will also be having vegetable tasting activities each week, which should be lots of fun! We know that sometimes vegetables aren't everyone's favorite snack, but we have some activities in store that will hopefully make vegetables fun again!

If you would like to join us for any of these fun activities, please let us know, as we'd love to have you!

Happy Growing!

Your Child's Teacher

At home CONNECTION

“This age of unbridled exploration must be accompanied exploration. Preschoolers are never safe unattended. And while you’re together, you have a chance to explain the life cycle of a seed or the history of evolution in an ancient fern. Let kids take the lead while you supply the background information. It’s in the storytelling that kids learn about gardening and the world. Don’t know all the answers? No one does. Library trips are part of the journey.”

— from KidsGardening.com
Bulb Sorting

Materials List:
- Store bought flower and plant bulbs of different sizes and weights
- Chart paper
- Marker

Purpose:
In order for the children to be comfortable with the planting and growing process, it is important for them to handle the real thing!

Instructions:
Have enough bulbs available so that multiple children can explore. Guide children in an exploration of the bulbs. Ask them simple questions like “Tell me about that bulb” or “Which one is larger?” Record the children’s thoughts and ideas on the chart paper and display it in your classroom.

What they learn:
Not all plants start from tiny seeds! Bulbs are unique and fun to handle and manipulate and the children will enjoy sorting, counting, and discovering their textures.

Garden Check
Make sure your children get at least 15 minutes of hands-on time in the garden each day this week!
Plant People

(adapted from "Kids Garden")

Materials List:
• Old nylon stocking
• Soil
• 2 tablespoons of grass seed
• Permanent marker
• Twist tie

Purpose:
Not all planting has to occur outdoors and not all growing has to be serious! This activity is designed to be fun and educational!

Instructions:
Cut the foot from the stocking and pour grass seed into the toe. Add soil until the foot is almost full and tie the stocking tightly with a twist tie. Place twist-tie end down and shape the “head.” Draw a nose, eyes and mouth on the face. Soak the head with water and place in a sunny spot and watch it grow “hair!”

What they learn:
The children will enjoy moistening their plant people daily and watching the “hair” sprout. It is another way to make gardening and plant growth fun and entertaining!
Plant & Flower Discovery

Materials List:
• Plastic or silk flowers and plants
• Plastic watering cans
• Plastic garden tools
• Chart Paper
• Marker

Purpose:
Encouraging the children to explore new things on their terms is very important to their development and confidence. Make time for “child-initiated” choice every day.

Instructions:
Place the flowers, plants, watering cans, and plastic tools in the dramatic play area. Allow the children to explore the items as they choose. Observe how they use the tools and record your observations on the chart paper. Display the chart in the classroom.

What they learn:
When children are encouraged to explore freely they gain confidence and decision making skills. Allowing them to touch and manipulate the fake flowers and tools will provide an opportunity for them to share their own thoughts and ideas.
Weight Lifting Seeds

(adapted from “Kids Garden”)

Materials List:
- Coins (Be mindful that coins can present a choking hazard to small children! Conduct this experiment with adult supervision at all times.)
- Bean seeds
- Small pot
- Potting soil

Purpose:
To show the children how relatively strong seeds are, join them in this science experiment.

Instructions:
Plant the bean seeds in the pot by adding soil, seeds, and some water. Cover the area just above the seeds with the coin. Be sure to keep the soil moist over the next few days and watch the seed sprout and “lift” the coin!

What they learn:
The children will begin to understand the relative nature of things like strength. Although a penny might be light to pick up for us, a seed has to push very hard to “lift” the coin as it grows. This activity provides an up close look at the growing process!
A Song of Flowers

Materials List:
- Chart paper
- Marker

Purpose:
Children learn through “doing.” Music is a great way to involve children in the learning process.

Instructions:
Copy the words to the song on the chart paper and display it in your classroom. Sing it with the children today and copy it down for the families so they can sing it at home.

What they learn:
The children will make the association between the written and spoken word and hopefully will enjoy learning and singing this cheerful song!

_A Song of Flowers (to the tune of “Sing a Song of Sixpence”)_

“Sing a song of flowers, flowers all around.

Flowers that are growing, growing in the ground!

Flowers of each color make a pretty view.

Red and orange and yellow, blue and purple too!”
**Plant Blocks**

**Materials List:**
- Blocks from the block learning center
- Glue or clear packing tape
- Pictures from magazines of plants

**Purpose:**
This free exploration activity will allow the children to come up with unique ways of using the plant blocks.

**Instructions:**
Attach the pictures to the blocks using glue or tape. Set the blocks out in a special basket in your blocks/building center and allow the children to use them for building, sorting, counting, or story telling. A great extension to this activity is to designate one special “plant block” as the “talking” block during circle time. Whenever it is someone’s turn to speak, they must be holding the “talking block.”

**What they learn:**
This activity will encourage the children to use their creativity. They will be able to explore and manipulate the blocks freely and will hopefully start making associations between the pictures on the blocks and the items growing in their gardens.
Vegetable Collages

Materials List:
• Pictures of vegetables from magazines
• Glue
• Construction paper

Purpose:
This activity will help promote the use of fine motor skills.

Instructions:
Place the paper, glue, and vegetable pictures on the art table and allow the children to make collages. Hang the finished pictures up to dry in the classroom after writing the children’s names on their pictures.

What they learn:
The children will learn to recognize familiar and maybe some not-so-familiar vegetables as they select and attach them to their individual paper. Displaying them at eye level in the classroom will help boost self-esteem and confidence!
Plant Jungle

(adapted from "Kids Garden")

Materials List:
- Plastic animals
- Artificial plants
- Real (non-poisonous) plants

Purpose:
Plants like living in groups just like us! With just 2 or more plants, you can create a jungle world in your classroom for exploration.

Instructions:
Set out animals and arrange plants in your dramatic play learning center. Encourage the children to explore the “jungle” you’ve created for them! You could even make a sign for the dramatic play area that welcomes the children and families to your classroom jungle!

What they learn:
This activity is the perfect opportunity to discuss other uses for plants besides food sources. Plants and trees are home to millions of animal species!
Plant Maze
(adapted from "Kids Garden")

Materials List:
- Large shoe box
- Small flower pot
- Potting soil
- A few “runner bean” seeds
- Cardboard pieces

Purpose:
Did you ever notice that plants stretch in the direction of light? This is called phototropism. This activity should help children understand this concept and just how determined plants are to find light!

Instructions:
Cut a hole in one end of the box and add two pieces of cardboard inside with holes in them, creating a maze for the bean seedling. Plant the seed about an inch deep in the pot and keep it moist. Place the pot on the other side of the box from the hole. Keep the box covered, with light entering only through the end hole. Watch it grow and find its way out!

What they learn:
The children will learn that plants need light in order to sprout and grow. Talk with the children about whether their plant reached for the sun or not and how they think it knew where to go!
The Mashed Potato

Materials List:
- Large space for moving

Purpose:
To get the children moving!

Instructions:
Teach your children the Mashed Potato dance from the 1960’s. The dance is done by pressing the balls of your feet down one at a time as you move your heels from side to side—as if you were squishing potatoes with your feet.

What they learn:
This fun movement activity should encourage your children to get active and might inspire more fun moving and shaking! Ask your children if they know any other vegetable themed songs or games.
Materials List:
- Picture of a tree; paper
- Picture of a cow; milk or cheese
- Picture of grain; bread
- Picture of a sheep; sweater
- Picture of coffee plant; cup of coffee, etc.
- Contact paper

Purpose:
This activity is designed so that children will begin to make the association between plants and animals in the natural world and more familiar items they might have seen at home or at school.

Instructions:
Choose pictures such as the ones listed above and contact paper them so they are sturdy. Set the pictures out in the block and building learning center and encourage the children to use them for matching or other creative games. Discuss the connection between the natural item and the man-made item.

What they learn:
This activity will hopefully help children start making the agricultural link between things they’ve seen, used, or eaten and where they actually come from in nature!
Our Garden Album

**Materials:**
- Photographs of the children working in the outdoor garden
- Large binder ring
- Hole-punch

**Purpose:**
This activity will allow the children to see what great progress they’ve been making in the outdoor garden so far!

**Instructions:**
Hopefully you’ve been taking photographs of the daily activities and discoveries that happen with your children in the outdoor garden. If not, be sure to get outside and take some! When you’ve collected enough pictures (try to make sure every child is in at least one), hole-punch them in the top left corner and attach the binder ring through. Have the children help you create this keepsake!

**What they learn:**
The children love seeing themselves in action and this album is a great way to teach them to have pride in what they are doing. For those who have not participated as much as others, this activity might encourage them to get more involved after seeing how fun it looks!
I’m a Vegetable!

Materials List:
- Pictures of vegetables
- Space for movement

Purpose:
This activity should help encourage the children to be creative and dramatic as they act like the vegetables they have come to know and love!

Instructions:
Set out the vegetable pictures and encourage the children to “act” like a vegetable. Allow them to be creative in their interpretations.

What they learn:
Dramatic play is a great way to encourage creativity and boost self-esteem. Encouraging the children to use their imaginations and to think about the properties of vegetables will hopefully stimulate their learning.
How Powerful?
(adapted from “Kids Garden”)

Materials List:
• Bean seeds
• Old coffee can
• Plaster of Paris

Purpose:
This activity touches on the same concepts as the “Weight Lifting Seeds” and is another way to show children the amazing power of plants!

Instructions:
Mix 2 cups Plaster of Paris mix with a little water, until it is thick like cream. “Plant” a few bean seeds under the surface. Allow the plaster to dry and turn hard like a rock. Keep the plaster moist by sprinkling it with water daily and watch the seeds break through like an earthquake!

What they learn:
The children will learn that even something hard as a rock can’t withstand the incredible force of a bean seed! Something that strong has to be good for you!
A Plant Will Grow

Materials List:
- A space for a large circle
- Chart paper
- Marker

Purpose:
Songs and rhymes are such a powerful educational tool! Sing and dance with your children often!

Instructions:
Teach the children the words to this fun song. Copy the words down on the paper and display them in your music learning center.

What they learn:
The children will practice cooperative skills as they take turns singing the fun lyrics!

A Plant Will Grow

My plants are growing, from the roots and the seeds down in the ground

Soon they'll be showing how the plant world gets around

It grows some roots, which uncoil

To soak up nutrients from the soil

And in a couple of weeks or so,

You know a plant will grow!
Box of Rocks

Materials:
- Clean rocks and sticks that the children have found in the garden
- Shoe box
- Chart paper
- Markers

Purpose:
The children need to learn about all the things found in the garden; not just those that are intended to be there!

Instructions:
Allow the children to gather rocks and sticks from the outdoor garden area and collect them in a large shoebox. Add the box of rocks to the block learning center and encourage the children to explore freely with them. Observe what they do and record them on the chart paper, displaying the chart when they are finished.

What they learn:
Manipulating and handling rocks of different sizes and textures will satisfy the children's sensory urges. They will enjoy the collection and identification process almost as much as playing with the rocks!
Materials List:
- Safe, non-toxic paints
- Paper
- Glue
- Grass
- Seeds

Purpose:
Allowing the children to create “process art” where the act of creating is more important than what they actually create!

Instructions:
Place the paints, glue, paper, grass, and seeds on the art table and encourage the children to paint a picture of the outdoor garden space. Allow the children to use their imaginations and don’t worry about the final product, after all it’s the process that counts!

What they learn:
By doing this open-ended, “process art” the children will learn to respect ideas and viewpoints different from their own. Also, this activity should get them thinking about the garden and reinforce the connection to their outdoor “classroom!
Summer Unit “Growing the Garden”
June Week 4
“Roots and Shoots”
Dramatic Play

Garden Shop

Materials List:
• Fake flowers and plants from Week 1
• Plastic tools
• Plastic watering cans
• Gardening gloves
• Plastic flower pots and planters
• Seed packets

Purpose:
Reintroducing past materials often re-energizes the children and gets them excited all over again! Adding a few new touches helps encourage new discovery!

Instructions:
Place all the items in the dramatic play learning center. Encourage the children to play “garden shop” with the materials.

What they learn:
Hopefully the children have a general concept of what it takes to maintain a garden and this activity should aid in their discovery of different jobs associated with gardening.
Adding Worms

Materials List:
- Worms gathered from outside
- Gloves

Purpose:
Worms keep plants healthy and they are harmless for children to handle.

Instructions:
Have the children find and gather worms from the outdoor garden and add them to your indoor plants to keep them super healthy! Once a week, bury a small amount of kitchen scraps under the soil as food for the worms.

What they learn:
By adding worms and nourishing them, the indoor plants will get the extra boost they need to grow strong and healthy! Teach children the valuable role worms play in the growth of your plants.
Summer Unit “Growing the Garden”
June Week 4
“Roots and Shoots”
Music and Movement

Do You Know the Parts of Plants?

Materials List:
• Chart paper
• Marker
• Large space for movement

Purpose:
To teach children basic plant parts through song!

Instructions:
Copy the words to the song on the chart paper and display it in the music learning center. Teach the children the words and enjoy singing along!

What they learn:
Basic plant parts are the focus of this playful rhyme. Review it often with your children.

Remember to introduce a new raw vegetable for tasting this week!
Do You Know the Parts of Plants?
(Tune: Head, Shoulders, Knees, And Toes)

Do you know the parts of plants,
Parts of plants?
Do you know the parts of plants,
Parts of plants?
All kinds of plants that grow and grow and grow.
Do you know the parts of plants,
Parts of plants?

The roots hold the plant in place,
Plant in place.
The roots hold the plant in place,
Plant in place.
The roots store food and water, too.
The roots hold the plant in place,
Plant in place.

The stem move water up the plant,
Up the plant.
The stem move water up the plant,
Up the plant.
The stem brings water to the leaves.
The stem move water up the plant,
Up the plant.

The leaves soak up the sun,
Soak up the sun.
The leaves soak up the sun,
Soak up the sun.
The sun helps the plant to grow and grow and grow.
The leaves soak up the sun,
Soak up the sun.

The flower grows into a fruit,
Into a fruit.
The flower grows into a fruit,
Into a fruit.
The flower grows into a fruit,
Into a fruit.

Inside the fruit are little tiny seeds.
The flower grows into a fruit,
Into a fruit.

Bud
Leaves
Stem
Leaf
Primary Root
Secondary Root
Root Hairs

Friday
97
Summer Unit  

Circle-Time Activities Menu

“Growing the Garden”

July Theme “Water and Bugs”

Week 1:  What bugs will we find in the garden?  
“Good” bugs and “bad” bugs  
Please be kind to bugs  
Why are vegetables important in our diet?  
Vegetable tasting  
Read “The Grouchy Ladybug” by Eric Carle

Week 2:  How much water is too much?  
What else needs water?  
Watering our indoor plants  
Why are vegetables important in our diet?  
Vegetable tasting  
Read “The Grouchy Ladybug” by Eric Carle

Week 3:  Bring in a bug!  
Can plants grow with just water?  
Measuring our plants  
Why are vegetables important in our diet?  
Vegetable tasting  
Read “Growing Vegetable Soup” by Louis Ehlert

Week 4:  Show and tell a favorite book about bugs or water  
If you were a bug…  
Taking pictures in the garden  
Why are vegetables important in our diet?  
Vegetable tasting  
Read “Growing Vegetable Soup” by Louis Ehlert
July “Water and Bugs”

Background for Teachers
This month your children will be learning about the things that are necessary for plant growth, like water, and insects! They will learn how and why to water plants and even get some hands-on practice if they haven’t already! They will explore bugs and learn about the functions they serve in the garden, both good and bad. This month will be another month of getting those hands dirty… or in this case, wet, so get ready!

Monthly Goals
This month you should really be getting down on your children’s level and exploring the earth with them. They should understand the growth process and what role they play in it by now. They should also be getting used to the vegetable tasting activities and hopefully are opening up and trying new things! Make sure you get out in the garden and take lots of pictures of the progress you and your children have made. Allow the children to share their ideas and what they’ve been learning about with each other, you, and their families.
Dear Family,

This month’s theme is “Water and Bugs” and is sure to be a hit with your child! We are going to be exploring the properties of water and learning why it is necessary for growth and life! We will also be exploring insects and learning to identify those that are helpful in the garden versus those that are pests.

We will continue to taste new things and explore in new ways this month and we encourage you to get involved with our learning by connecting some of the gardening concepts we’re discussing to the home.

Happy Growing!

Your Child’s Teacher

At home CONNECTION
“Kids have so much competing for their attention: television, computers, sports, and a bazillion “planned” activities from library hours to birthday parties. So gardening has to stand on its own. The balance is to teach respect and enjoyment of the family gardens and make sure there’s a garden a kid can call his or her own. Here dirt and water are the stuff of magic, and surprises lurk between rows. Anyone can succeed under the sun. “I did it myself” is a powerful thing.”

— from KidsGardening.com
Bugs Exploration

Materials List:
- Plastic bugs
- Wooden blocks
- Clean, plastic flower pots
- Marker
- Chart paper

Purpose:
Allowing children to explore a new material on their terms can help them feel more comfortable manipulating it and can open them up to the learning process!

Instructions:
Place the plastic bugs, wooden blocks, and flower pots in a large basket or shoe box in your block learning center. Encourage the children to manipulate the materials in any way they choose. Observe their behaviors and record what they do and say on the chart paper and display it in your classroom.

What they learn:
If there is enough variety in the bugs, blocks, and pots the children might use them for counting, sorting by color, etc.!
Rain Sticks

Materials List:
- Recycled cardboard tubes
- Paint
- Recycled brown grocery bag
- Rubber bands
- Toothpicks
- Dry rice
- Tissues

Purpose:
To introduce the children to the sounds of rain!

Instructions:
Decorate the outside of the tube by painting it. While the tube is drying, make end covers by cutting circles at least 3 inches larger than the tube from the double thick bottom of the grocery bag. Add toothpicks, crushed tissues, and dry rice to the tube. Attach the ends with strong rubber bands and turn the tube over slowly to hear the sounds of the falling rain!

What they learn:
This activity should get your children’s imaginations going as they think about the real rain they’ve seen and heard in nature.
A Bug’s Home

Materials List:
• Pictures of insects and spiders
• Pictures of dirt, hives, webs, etc.
• Chart paper
• Marker

Purpose:
Bugs have homes just like people. This activity should get your children thinking about where a bug might like to live.

Instructions:
Gather your children together and show them the different pictures. Have them share their ideas about which bug might live where and why. Talk about human homes and how they are different. Record their ideas and thoughts on the chart paper and display it in your classroom.

What they learn:
Children are egocentric, so it is important for children to understand things outside their daily routines. Most of them have probably never thought of bugs as having real homes and this simple discussion activity should get them thinking!
Materials List:
• Nine dried beans
• Three saucers or jar lids
• Paper towels
• Water

Purpose:
To see how important it is to get just the right amount of water for a plant, experiment with your children!

Instructions:
Put three seeds on each saucer or lid. On the first saucer, soak the beans thoroughly. On the second saucer, place the seeds on a moist paper towel and keep them slightly moist. Keep the seeds in the third saucer dry. Place all the saucers in a dark place and wait about a week. Make sure the first saucer stays soaked, the second moist, and the third dry.

What they learn:
The results will tell you how water amounts affect the seeds!
The Insect Song
(tune: 3 Blind Mice)

Buzz, buzz, buzz.
Bumblebees buzz.
Buzz over here.
Buzz over there.

*They buzz up high and they buzz down low.*

*Around and around and around they go.*

*They buzz-buzz fast, and they buzz-buzz slow.*

*Oh, bumblebees buzz!*

Repeat the song, replacing the insect name and its corresponding action word with each of these word pairs in turn: grasshoppers/hop, butterflies/flipper, little ants/run, ladybugs/fly, crickets/jump.
Will it Float?

Materials List:
- Various items that float
- Various items that sink
- Large tub or sensory table
- Water

Purpose:
Children need to understand all of the properties of water and what better way to do that than with this fun floating/sinking experiment!

Instructions:
Have all participating children wash their hands with soap and water before playing in the water table or tubs. Add lukewarm water, floating items, and sinking items to the table or tub. Encourage children to experiment with things that float and things that sink.

What they learn:
When they are out in the garden, the children might encounter things floating or sinking in water troughs or watering cans. This activity should introduce these concepts and help them to identify floaters and sinkers!
Bug Antennae

Materials List:
- Construction Paper
- Crayons, markers or paint
- Pipe cleaners
- Pom poms
- Glue
- Tape

Purpose:
Allowing the children to create their own alternate identity is a great way to get them excited about learning!

Instructions:
Using the construction paper, cut out a strip of paper about 2 inches thick and long enough to wrap around the child’s forehead (make sure you make it an inch or two longer so you can tape the ends together.) Encourage children to use crayons, markers, and/or paint to make the headband colorful.

Glue the pom-poms to one end of each pipe cleaner. Put the other end of each pipe cleaner up against the center of the strip of paper, about 4-6 inches apart. Tape them in place.

Once the “antennae” are attached, tape the ends of the strip together to snuggly fit around the child’s fore head.

What they learn:
This activity encourages children to use their fine motor skills to create their bug “antennae.”
Summer Unit “Growing the Garden”
July Week 2
“Water and Bugs”
Dramatic Play

I’m a Bug!

Materials List:
• Antennae headbands that the children made yesterday
• Music to move to
• Marker
• Chart paper

Purpose:
Sometimes extending a project for a longer period of time can help the children learn.

Instructions:
Encourage the children to wear their bug antennae around in the dramatic play learning center. They can dance to the music and should be encouraged to make “bug-like” movements. Chart down your observations of their behaviors and display the chart in your classroom.

What they learn:
The children have seen many bugs so far out in the garden, now it is time to see if they can internalize some of the movements and behaviors of their bug friends!
**Automatic Waterer**
(adapted from "Kids Garden")

**Materials List:**
- Indoor potted plant (you should have plenty!)
- Piece of thick string
- Plastic bucket
- Water

**Purpose:**
Sometimes when you can’t water plants on a daily basis, you have to get creative!

**Instructions:**
Bury one end of the string in the plant’s soil and hang the other end over into the bucket of water. Watch over the next few days as the water is soaked up by the string and carried to the plant automatically!

**What they learn:**
Not all great inventions have to cost money! This simple demonstration should get the kids thinking about ways to be creative and innovative with what you have!
Summer Unit “Growing the Garden”

July Week 2
“Water and Bugs”
Music and Movement

This Pretty Planet

Materials List:
• Chart paper
• Marker

Purpose:
Gardening is just one way that children can take care of the earth. Teach this simple rhyme to your children and get them thinking about how important our planet is.

Instructions:
Copy the words onto chart paper and display them in your classroom.

What they learn:
This song should get a discussion going about how important it is to take care of the earth.

This Pretty Planet
This pretty plant spinning in space
My garden, my harbor, my special place
Golden sun going down
Gentle blue giant, spinning around
All through the night
Safe ‘till the morning light

Remember to introduce a new raw vegetable for tasting this week!
Garden Puzzles

Materials List:
- Pictures of plants
- Pictures of bugs
- Pictures of garden tools
- Pictures of watering cans
- Contact paper
- Scissors
- Plastic bag

Purpose:
Your children should be able to recognize these familiar gardening items even when all the pieces are mixed up!

Instructions:
Cut out the pictures from magazines ahead of time. Contact paper them on both sides so they are sturdy. Cut them into simple “puzzle” pieces. Place them in a plastic bag and encourage children to put the pieces back together again.

What they learn:
Working puzzles helps to develop good hand-eye coordination.
Melting Art

Materials List:
- Sugar cubes
- Food coloring
- Plastic eye or medicine droppers
- White paper
- Water

Purpose:
To help children understand the properties of water!

Instructions:
Provide cups of water that have food coloring added to them. Lay the sugar cubes out on the white paper. Encourage the children how to fill the droppers with the colored water and squirt it slowly out on top of the sugar cubes. Watch carefully as the sugar cubes “melt” and the food coloring stains the paper to create beautiful art work!

What they learn:
There are many ways to use water and many ways to create beautiful artwork. Allowing the children to use their fine motor skills to create the picture will help them understand how useful water is!
Catching Bugs

Materials List:
- Plastic bugs and insects
- Butterfly nets
- Magnifying glasses
- Note pads and pencils

Purpose:
To encourage the children to use their imaginations as they “catch” and identify insects that they may have seen in the outdoor garden.

Instructions:
Place all materials in the dramatic play learning center and encourage the children to freely explore them.

What they learn:
Hopefully the children can identify some of the characteristics of the insects they “catch.” Get involved with them in this exploration and help make connections to the outdoor garden.
Suck it Up

Materials List:
• A few stalks of celery
• Food coloring
• Plastic container
• Water
• Knife (teachers only)

Purpose:
To illustrate how plants of all kinds take in water, conduct this experiment with your children.

Instructions:
Fill the container half way with water. Add the food coloring to the water and stir until evenly mixed. Cut about 1 inch off the bottom of the celery. Stand the celery stalk in the container, with the leaves sticking up. Leave the celery overnight and then watch as the water and the plant has “sucked up” and absorbed all the colors!

What they learn:
The color brings the experiment to life and the children will gain an understanding of the importance of water to all living things.
Bug Boogie

Materials List:
• Fun, up beat music
• Large space for movement

Purpose:
To get the children moving!

Instructions:
Turn on the music and encourage the children to do the “bug boogie!”

What they learn:
Physical activity is so important and this fun movement activity should really energize the children today!
Build a Bug House

**Materials:**
- Variety of blocks and building materials
- Plastic bugs

**Purpose:**
By now the children should understand that even bugs are living things and they have homes.

**Instructions:**
Encourage the children to build a home for the bugs!

**What they learn:**
Even our insect friends need a place to stay!
Painting with Grass

Materials List:
- Grass that has been picked from outside
- Paint
- Paper

Purpose:
Incorporating things from the outdoors and the garden into the classroom is an important element in connecting the concepts for children.

Instructions:
Gather all the elements and make them available to the children. Encourage the children to drag the grass through the paint and then drag it across their paper.

What they learn:
The children will learn that creativity is important to learning and that using something natural to paint is a good way to reduce, reuse, and recycle!
Summer Unit “Growing the Garden”
July Week 4
“Water and Bugs”
Dramatic Play

Playing in the Rain

Materials List:
• Child-sized umbrellas
• Small plastic buckets
• Child sized ponchos or rain coats
• Child sized boots

Purpose:
To allow the children to freely explore clothing that they might need when the go outside in the rain!

Instructions:
Set all the materials out in your dramatic play learning center. Encourage the children to play freely with the items. Talk with them about weather and ask them things like “Can we still go outside when it is raining?” and “What sort of things do you like to do on a rainy day?”

What they learn:
It is important for children to be physically active and connected to the outdoors. Too often children are discouraged from getting wet and dirty but that is part of childhood! This activity should spark conversations about being out in nature even in rainy weather!

*Be sure to talk about safety and supervision with the children. Make sure they understand that they never go anywhere without their parents knowledge and that they should not go outside during thunderstorms.
Smelly Water

Materials List:
- Various flavored/scented extracts (vanilla, lemon, etc.)
- Plastic cups
- Food coloring
- Marker
- Chart paper
- Water

Purpose:
Things in the natural world have scent and taste. This activity is designed to help children distinguish between different scents.

Instructions:
Fill each cup half full of water and add a drop of food coloring to each. Then add a drop of extract to each. Encourage the children to take turns smelling the cups of water and describing what they smell. Use the marker and chart paper to record their responses.

What they learn:
This activity should make children more aware of what they are sensing (smelling, seeing, hearing, tasting, feeling) and provide them with the vocabulary to describe their experiences.
Summer Unit “Growing the Garden”
July Week 4
“Water and Bugs”
Music and Movement

Sounds of Nature

Materials List:
• CD with sounds of waterfalls or rain

Purpose:
To bring the outdoors in, listen to the rain sounds with the children!

Instructions:
Tell the children that you are going to pretend you are outside in the rain or by a waterfall. Encourage them to sit quietly and listen to the sounds of the water. Ask them to describe the sounds and what they envision in a place like that.

What they learn:
This focused listening activity should get the children thinking about water and the sounds that it makes falling from the sky or from a waterfall.

Remember to introduce a new raw vegetable for tasting this week!
Summer Unit  Circle-Time Activities Menu
“Growing the Garden”

August Theme
“Vegetables and Composting”

Week 1:  What is a compost?  
What is your favorite vegetable?  
What about when vegetables die?  
Vegetable tasting  
Read “Eating the Alphabet” by Louis Ehlert

Week 2:  Bring in something recycled  
What have we learned about in the garden?  
The food pyramid  
Vegetable tasting  
Read “Eating the Alphabet” by Louis Ehlert

Week 3:  Vegetable alphabet  
What do worms do?  
What can you make out of trash?  
Why are vegetables good for you?  
Vegetable tasting  
Read “Composting” by Robin Zoontz and Mathew Harrad

Week 4:  Where do vegetables grow?  
Have any of our vegetables not been successful?  
What can you use compost for?  
Vegetable tasting  
Read “Composting” by Robin Zoontz and Mathew Harrad
August

“Vegetables and Composting”

Background for Teachers
By this time the vegetables should be up and ready for picking! The children should really enjoy identifying the different things they have helped to grow both indoors and out. They will learn how to remove vegetables gently from the plants and what uses they have after picking—like eating! You will also join your children on an exploration of composting and recycling. Your children will learn what compost is and why it is useful as well as discover the many uses for “trash!”

Monthly Goals
Since it is almost harvest time, really focus on the vegetables that the children have grown and keep encouraging the tasting activities. Encourage the children to get their hands dirty and share their ideas about the topics. All summer long the key has been discovery and now it is the time to celebrate their growing success! Maybe this month you could even have a class picnic in the garden with all of the goodies they’ve grown!
Dear Family,

The last theme of the summer is “Vegetables and Composting.” We have really enjoyed all the digging and discovering that we've done over these last few months and are hoping to see, smell, touch, and taste the results this month! We will be learning about what we've grown and what happens when the plants die.

We will also be talking about taking care of the earth by composting and recycling old plant and vegetable material!

Happy Growing!

Your Child’s Teacher

At home CONNECTION

“Recognize that kids’ gardening priorities are different, well, practically opposite of adults. Let kids choose what they want to plant and offer guidance. Leave room for good old-fashioned digging. Holes are a highly popular landscape feature! Look for worms, add water, and watch for frogs. Remember: One of the best things you ever grow may be a gardener.”

— from KidsGardening.com
**Vegetable Sorting**

**Materials List:**
- A variety of store bought or garden-grown vegetables of different shapes, sizes, textures, colors, smells

**Purpose:**
To give the children an opportunity to touch and feel the vegetables they have grown and become familiar with.

**Instructions:**
Set up a vegetable sorting station and encourage the children to discuss the differences in the vegetables. Which ones are similar? Why? Encourage them to share their ideas.

**What they learn:**
The children will start seeing some of the differences and similarities in different vegetable varieties.

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Garden Check
Make sure your children get at least 15 minutes of hands-on time in the garden each day this week!
Vegetable Prints

Materials List:
- Store bought or garden-grown vegetables
- Knife (teachers only)
- Paper
- Paint

Purpose:
Teaching children not to waste is important. When they are done eating the main part of a cucumber, for example, the ends make great art materials!

Instructions:
Cut the ends off of various vegetables like cucumber, potatoes, or squash. Encourage the children to dip the vegetables into the paint and make prints on their paper. Discuss the shapes the vegetables created on the paper.

What they learn:
Artistic expression is very important for young children. This activity should provide the children with the opportunity to use their creativity to connect things they’ve been growing in the garden.
Summer Unit “Growing the Garden”
August Week 1
“Vegetables & Composting”
Dramatic Play

I’m a Gardener!

Materials List:
- Child sized gardening gloves
- Plastic gardeners tools
- Hats
- Plastic watering cans
- Artificial plants and vegetables

Purpose:
This activity is the perfect time to review many of the concepts that you’ve been teaching them all summer!

Instructions:
Place all materials in the dramatic play learning center and encourage children to explore them freely. Observe how they behave and what qualities of gardeners they emulate.

What they learn:
The children should already have a concept of what it takes to work in and maintain a garden but this activity will give them the opportunity to put some of that knowledge to the test!
Materials List:
- Empty 2-liter bottle
- Vegetable scraps (uncooked)
- Leaves, grass, yard clippings, weeds
- Scissors (teachers only)

Purpose:
To start introducing what compost is and why it is useful!

Instructions:
Cut the 2-liter bottle in half and add all elements to the bottom of it. Continue to add weeds as they are picked from the garden. Observe how the materials break down into compost.

What they learn:
Compost is very beneficial to the soil and the garden because it has lots of nutrients in it. When the compost is ready for use in the garden or in potted plants, it will look and feel like potting soil.
Summer Unit “Growing the Garden”

August Week 1
“Vegetables & Composting”

Music and Movement

Goodbye Ivy

(adapted from “Kids Garden”)

Materials List:
• Marker
• Chart paper

Purpose:
To make the children understand that it is okay when the plants they have cared for so much have died.

Instructions:
Copy the words to this poem down on the chart paper and teach it to the children. If they have named one or more of their indoor or outdoor plants, you can encourage them to make up a poem about that plant too.

What they learn:
Like all living things, plants die. Some die of old age or too little or too much water.

Goodbye Ivy

Goodbye, Ivy, you were nice.
I watered you once, I watered you twice.
Then from the window sill you fell.
You broke your leaves, and stem as well.
You’re gone now, but I’ll remember
You as compost in September.
Materials List:
- Variety of recyclable items like cans, plastic bottles, paper, shopping bags, Styrofoam etc.
- Variety of non-recyclable items
- Two bins for sorting

Purpose:
Getting the children to understand that we can reduce our waste by recycling!

Instructions:
Place all materials in the blocks learning center and encourage the children to decide what items are recyclable and what items are just garbage. Teach them to recognize the recycle symbol.

What they learn:
Most, if not all of the items can be recycled!
Garbage Art

Materials List:
- A variety of small plastic and paper items like plastic cutlery, straws, paper plates, etc.
- Glue
- Paper
- Scissors (teachers only)

Purpose:
To teach children how to reuse items.

Instructions:
Cut the plastic items so that they are small enough to be glued onto the paper. Encourage the children to make “garbage art” using the old items.

What they learn:
Recycling is only one of the 3 R’s (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle!). Reusing items is another way to take care of the planet.
Materials List:
- Real and artificial produce
- Note pads
- Pencils
- Play money
- Cash register

Purpose:
To teach children that once the vegetables have been grown, they can be sold to others for consumption as a way to build healthy communities!

Instructions:
Place the items in the dramatic play learning center and encourage the children to pretend to be farmers and customers buying and selling produce.

What they learn:
Most children have never been to a farmer’s market, but perhaps they’ve seen the produce section at the local grocery store! This activity is designed to help them understand the important role that farmers play in our communities.
Time to Repot

Materials List:
• Potting soil
• Larger pots than those that your indoor plants currently live in

Purpose:
To allow the children to assist in the repotting of the indoor plants that may have outgrown their pots and planters.

Instructions:
Explain to the children that because the plants have been growing all summer, their roots might be getting a bit snug in the small pots they started in. Allow them to assist you in filling new pots with soil and gently repotting the plants in the larger pots.

What they learn:
Involving children in the care and maintenance of the plants helps build their social skills and reminds them that living things require lots of care.
Summer Unit “Growing the Garden”
August Week 2
“Vegetables & Composting”
Music and Movement

Fruits & Vegetables

(adapted from GroovyPyramid.com)

Materials List:
• Chart paper
• Marker
• Poster of the food pyramid (copy from teacher’s guide)

Purpose:
To review how to make healthy food choices.

Instructions:
Display the food pyramid poster in your classroom. Copy down the lyrics to the poem on the chart paper and teach them to the children.

What they learn:
Hopefully this activity will open up a line of discussion about the food guide pyramid and how to make healthy food choices.

“In the morning, the best time to eat - Energy calling - Cause you’re up on your feet.
And what to do when your body needs a boost?
Go with vegetable, grain and fruit!”
Garden Maps

**Materials List:**
- Markers
- Paper

**Purpose:**
To get the children to come up with their own ideas for a garden.

**Instructions:**
Encourage the children to use the materials to draw maps of the outdoor garden or an imaginary garden. Discuss what they’ve drawn and label their pictures as they explain their ideas.

**What they learn:**
You will hopefully see that the children have really learned a lot this summer and that they have a good concept of the components to a garden.

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**Garden Check**
Make sure your children get at least 15 minutes of hands-on time in the garden each day this week!
Materials List:
- Store bought or garden grown vegetables
- Tooth picks
- Permanent marker
- Glue
- Googly eyes

Purpose:
Vegetables aren’t just to grow and eat, there are lots of uses for them!

Instructions:
Assist children in creating “people” with the materials. Glue or draw eyes and a mouth, use the tooth picks for arms or hair. You could even cut off the top of the vegetable, add a small amount of potting soil, and a few grass seeds to grow your own hair!

What they learn:
This activity can be done in teams or small groups, which will help children feel comfortable sharing their ideas and working together.
Make Me Something Good to Eat!

Materials List:
• Pictures of healthy food
• Poster of the food pyramid
• Play food items
• Chart paper
• Marker

Purpose:
To teach children about healthy eating.

Instructions:
Place all the materials in the dramatic play learning center and encourage the children to “cook” healthy foods! Observe their play and make observations on the chart paper.

What they learn:
Making healthy food choices is very important to a healthy lifestyle. By now the children should have a concept of what is healthy and what is not.
Worm Observatory

Materials List:
- 2 clear plastic containers (one slightly smaller than the other)
- Soil (not potting soil)
- Worms
- Screen or piece of stocking
- Rubber band

Purpose:
To allow the children to observe worms in their natural environment.

Instructions:
Place the smaller container (an inch or so smaller in diameter) inside the larger container. You are creating a narrow enough space between the containers so you’ll be able to see the worms tunnel. Fill the space between the 2 containers with a good supply of fresh soil, and keep it moist (but not soaked). Put in some worms, and then cover the container with a piece of screen or stocking for good airflow. Secure this cover with a rubber band.

What they learn:
The children should be able to see the worms dig and burrow as they do in nature!
Materials List:
- Marker
- Chart paper

Purpose:
To talk about worms through song!

Instructions:
Copy the words to the song on the chart paper and teach it to the children. Talk about why they think Herman eats so many things. What kind of animal is he? Would a worm really eat the things in the song? What does he eat in the garden? Why is he useful?

What they learn:
Hopefully this playful song will give a name to the little crawly friends they’ve come to know in the garden and teach them that worms are great helpers in nature!

Herman the Worm

I was sitting on the fence post (slap knees)
I was chewing on my bubble gum (chomp, chomp, chomp, chomp) Playing with my yo- yo (up and down with hands)
Doo-wop, doo-wop (continue yo-yo motion)

When along came Herman the worm yeah (worm motion with hands)
and he was.....
1 inch (verse 1) (measure with hands)
6 inches (verse 2)
1 foot (verse 3)
2 feet (verse 4)

And I said “Herman what happened?”

And Herman said “Duuuuuhhh, I swallowed a...”
bug in a rug (verse 1)
mouse in the house (verse 2)
kitty cat, imagine that (verse 3)
puppy dog, what a hog (verse 4)

Oh Herman!!!

And Herman just crawled away like this
crawling fingers - (verse 1)
crawling hand - (verse 2)
crawling arms & hand - (verse 3)
whole body - (verse 4)

Last verse:
And he was three feet...
No, he was two feet...
No, he was 1 inch.

And I said "Herman what happened?"

And Herman said “Duuuhhh, I burped!”

Oh Herman!
Build a Garden

Materials List:
- A variety of blocks
- Garden maps that the children made last week

Purpose:
To extend the garden map activity and keep the children thinking about the construction and design of the garden.

Instructions:
Place the blocks and the finished maps in the block learning center. Encourage the children to build what they’ve drawn out!

What they learn:
The children will see that their pictures and original ideas have meaning and can be translated into something concrete!
Materials List:
- Large chart paper or poster board pieces
- Markers
- Photographs of the outdoor garden
- Photographs of plants in various stages

Purpose:
To show the children that all the hard work they’ve been doing this summer is paying off!

Instructions:
Involve the children in making a timeline that shows all the great things you have worked on this summer. Be sure to include photographs of milestones in the garden, the children picking and tasting the vegetables, and of the garden in various stages of growth. Add little details, discoveries, or funny things that the children have said along the way. Display the timeline in your classroom. Continue to work on this project all week and involve the children and families in any way that you can.

What they learn:
This activity will serve as a visual reminder of the things that they’ve been able to participate in this summer and will be a valuable keepsake.