

Classroom Activities for Gardening, Growing & Nature Books

by Deborah Hodge

Use these earth-friendly activities to accompany nature books such as: *Up We Grow! A Year in the Life of a Small, Local Farm* & *Watch Me Grow! A Down-to-Earth Look at Growing Food in the City*. Some of the activities also work with the books *Bees & Ants* from the Denver Museum Insect series.

Language Arts

Have children write a poem about their favourite insect or animal in nature.

- Animal's name (one word)
- Two verbs describing how it moves
- Three adjectives describing how it looks
- A four word phrase about the animal
- Another word for the animal

Bee

Flying, buzzing

Furry, yellow, striped

Collects nectar from flowers

Insect

Seasons Poem: Use your five senses to write a poem about your favourite season. For example:

- Fall looks like _____
- Fall sounds like _____
- Fall smells like _____
- Fall tastes like _____
- Fall feels like _____

Fall looks like red and yellow leaves falling from the trees

Fall sounds like geese honking as they fly overhead

Fall smells like pumpkin pie warm from the oven

Fall tastes like the crunch of a crisp, juicy apple

Fall feels like a chilly wind blowing — whoosh!

Nature Diary: Go on a nature walk and draw or write about the plants and animals you see. Take other walks later in the year. Compare what you see then.

Science

Herb garden: Grow herbs such as basil, oregano or parsley on a sunny windowsill. Put seeds in potting soil into small containers, and add water. Watch them grow!

Compare seeds: Cut open different kinds of fruit and compare the seeds you find. Look at: the number of seeds, their colour, size and shape. Make a graph or chart to show your findings.

Life Cycle Diagram: Choose an insect or animal and draw the stages of its life. For example, show the four stages of a bee, from egg to larva, pupa and adult.

Bird watching: What birds live in your area? Go on a bird walk and take a notebook to keep track of the birds you see. Note their colours, markings, songs and behaviour. When you get back to your class, learn more about the birds by checking a field guide. Write about what you find.

Bird feeder: Spread peanut butter on a pine cone, roll it in bird seed, and use yarn to hang your feeder from a tree. Watch who comes to eat!

Compost bin: Make a class compost bin and recycle all your fruit and vegetable leftovers. Use the compost in your school garden.

School garden: Find a patch of soil where you can dig and plant a school garden. Get everyone involved!

Fine Arts

Sketch the Seasons: Fold a piece of paper into 4 squares. Write the name of a season at the top of each square (spring, summer, fall and winter). Draw a picture in each square that shows something about the season.

Nature rubbings: Collect textured items such as rocks, feathers, leaves, bark, shells and so on. Place a piece of construction paper over the items. Rub the paper gently with crayons until the textured images appear.

Bee-friendly flowers: Bees are important in nature! Use egg carton cups, pipe cleaners, paint, spray perfume, and glitter to design brightly coloured flowers that bees would love to visit.

Nature Mural: Make a mural (or individual pictures) using objects from nature: twigs, grasses, feathers, leaves, seeds and so on. Paint or draw in some birds, animals and insects who live in nature.

Additional Activities

Check BEES and ANTS, written by Deborah Hodge, for additional classroom-friendly activities. Included in the books are instructions for: building a model bee or ant; a sense of smell experiment; insect observation activities; making a model ant nest; honeycomb prints; and more.

Your Ideas

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