

Make Your Own Seed Packets

Budding scientists not only learn about the hows and the whys of the natural world on our planet, but they also learn how to be earth-friendly in an effort to preserve it. Recycling and reusing, of course, are two basic ways that people of all ages can help to save our planet. Fostering an appreciation for plant and animal life, too, is important in guiding children toward making responsible, earth-friendly choices.

For a great autumn activity, try creating homemade seed packets with your child! It will combine your child's love for science and the outdoors with a little writing and drawing fun.

What You Need:

- Junk mail envelopes
- Markers
- Tape
- Scissors
- Stickers
- Seeds (from your garden or neighborhood)
- Newspaper
- Digital camera (optional)

What to Do:

1. First, have your child help you gather seeds. Check your garden, flower beds, backyard, and even your kitchen for seeds. Here are some ideas: marigolds (let the flower heads die off, then pull the seeds out of the top); milkweeds (look for pods that have “exploded” with milkweed fluff; the seeds are attached to the end of the fluff); pumpkin seeds from your Halloween jack-o-lantern (rinse, then spread out on newspaper to thoroughly dry for several days); beans (let the pods grow full and the pod skins leathery; remove beans from pod and let dry on newspaper); sunflowers (remove seeds when they are fully mature and dry in the seed head).
2. Got junk mail? Those postage-paid envelopes that come inside your junk mail can be recycled and put to good use. Collect several for this project. Seal them shut, then cut each in half. You'll need one-half an envelope for each type of seed you and your child collected.
3. Now have your child label and decorate the envelope. Encourage him to think about what images and information might need to be on a seed packet, for example, the name of the plant; instructions for sowing and growing, if you know them; and how big the plant will grow. Don't forget to include an image of the plant that the seed will grow into. If you can, use a digital camera to take a picture of the plant, and have him cut and paste it to the envelope. He could also use markers to draw an illustration of the plant.
4. For fun, and to preserve special family moments, your child can include special information about the history of the seeds. Were these seeds taken from the Halloween jack-o-lantern? If so, have him write a sentence about it on the seed packet, or give the seed packet a special sub-title, such as The 2008 Jack-O-Lantern Seeds. This will help to personalize the seed packets, and make planting them even more memorable next spring.
5. Place the dry seeds in the packet, and fold the top of the packet over to close it up. Then seal the fold with a decorative sticker. Next spring, dig out those seed packets to plant anew! You and your child will have planted the seeds for great family memories and learning.



