

Make a "See Through" Seed Museum

One of the most common kindergarten science topics is life itself. Is that rock over there alive or not? How can you tell? When it's a seed (which looks like a rock at first), things get very interesting indeed. Not only can a seed sprout into a living plant, but each seed, and each plant, will be slightly different, just like all of us.

Here's an exciting way for kids to put this all together to make a growing seed museum that your child can watch, using simple household materials.

What You Need:

- Large glass jar (mayonnaise jars work great)
- 4-5 different kinds of seeds (such as radish, bean, pea, lettuce, carrot, spinach, squash, cucumber or marigold)
- Several pieces of paper towels
- Small stick-on labels
- Black construction paper



What You Do:

1. Start by selecting your seeds, and identifying each one. Have your child write the name of each plant on a small stick-on label, and place the seed on it so everything is clear.
2. Lay a stack of 4 thick paper towels flat, fold them in half lengthwise, and spray them lightly with water until they are damp. Gently roll them and place them into the jar, so that the toweling lightly touches the sides of the jar.
3. Have your child help you slide a seed between the toweling and the interior of the jar, so that you and your child can see the seed clearly through the glass. Repeat with each different kind of seed. Working together, label each seed by sticking the corresponding label on the jar by the seed.
4. Wrap the jar in the black construction paper and tie it lightly with string (you'll want to untie it many times over the next few days to peek!). Take the Phillips-head screwdriver and make air holes in the lid of the jar. Screw it on, and place your jar on a counter.
5. For the next several days, leave the black paper on, but don't hesitate to untie it and peek with your child. Make sure the seeds have plenty of water, too. What's happening? (Each seed will germinate at a slightly different time and in a slightly different way, but each will start sending out a root and a shoot.)
6. After all the seeds have germinated, take the black paper off entirely. How are the seeds doing? Talk like a scientist with your child: which seeds grew fastest? Which had the longest roots? If you have a yard or a planter, now is a great time to transplant your plants into soil, and watch them grow bigger!

As you and your child tend your seed museum, you may also want to extend the learning with some children's books about gardens. One of my favorites is "The Carrot Seed," by Ruth Krauss. A little boy weathers the doubts of everyone in his family to prove that his carrot seed will grow. He learns, as your child will in this experiment, that seeds really are alive...and with good care, they'll even thrive. Who knows? Keep up that garden and you may even have a harvest in a few months' time.