



# Grow Your Own Garden



Format: This is a **Family-Centered Education (FCE)** lesson plan. FCE helps children and parents interact with each other. It promotes the parent as the first teacher of the child and helps get children ready for school- all while learning about nutrition!

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Who this class is for

**Families with children of preschool age.** This will not work as well with younger children.

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Why WIC is offering this class

We know that preschool children are eating fewer than the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

Kids tend to eat what they grow! Gardening is fun for children, and has been shown to increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables.

People who are involved in public health education and research have noticed that children are more likely to eat what they grow themselves. The *Five-A-Day Power Play* campaign suggests that one way to increase fruit and vegetable consumption is to involve children in gardening. Teachers can use gardening to integrate nutrition and health concepts into the broader curriculum so that children learn other academic skills better. Other benefits of gardening are:

- it develops environmental awareness in children by caring for a living environment,
- it promotes intergenerational sharing and learning,
- it provides opportunities for cultural exchange, and
- it builds life skills.

**Objectives****By the end of this session, families will have:**

- identified the three things a seed needs to be able to grow.
  - planted a vegetable or herb in a container to take home for future eating.
  - described how gardening activities can enhance nutrition at home.
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**Time****35 minutes**

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**Set-Up  
and  
Getting  
Ready**

1. Copy parent handouts for your group (see Materials list).
2. Review the book, *Growing Vegetable Soup (A Sembrar Sopa De Verduras)* by Lois Ehlert.
3. Cover table(s) with newspaper or other table covering.
4. Arrange items for Family Activity: Plant Your Own—
  - small containers for each family (described in Materials section)
  - small rocks or pebbles for containers
  - seeds (lettuce, basil, cilantro, chard)
  - potting soil placed in a large container with a scooping spoon
  - a watering can (store-bought or orange juice jug with holes punched in the top)
5. Fill one container with soil.

Set-Up  
and  
Getting  
Ready  
(continued)

6. Put overview on large sheet of paper or flip chart.

**Grow Your Own Garden**

Welcome and Introductions

Warm-Up

Book Sharing: *Growing Vegetable Soup*

Family Activity: Planting

Take Home Learning Activities

7. Cue the music to the title song on “Dirt Made My Lunch” by Banana Slug String Band.

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## General Materials

### **Tape or CD Player**

**Music:** “Dirt Made My Lunch” or “La Tierra y El Mar” by Banana Slug String Band

**Book:** *Growing Vegetable Soup (or A Sembrar Sopa De Verduras)* by Lois Ehlert

### **Demonstration Materials:**

- Table to use for planting activity
- Old newspapers or other table covering
- Picture of a sandwich, apple, and glass of milk

### **Gardening Supplies:**

- Seeds of different sizes in a small bowl, such as watermelon, apples, pumpkin seeds, mild pepper seeds
- Containers for gardening: 1 per child or family . These could be: large soup cans, 2-pound yogurt or cottage cheese tubs, half-gallon milk containers, etc.
- Seeds for planting (such as lettuce, basil, cilantro, chard)
- Potting soil (1 sq foot or 5 lb bag)
- Pebbles or small rocks for bottom of containers
- Large spoon
- Plastic shopping bag (or similar) for each participant
- Gardening gloves (optional)
- Watering can (optional)

### **Handouts for Parents:** (in English and/or Spanish)

- “Tips for Parents”
- “Container Gardening – Four Easy Steps”
- “Gardening Time Line”
- “Reading to Children”
- List of local community gardens in your neighborhood (if available)
- Listing of local libraries (suggested)

Lesson  
Overview  
(35 minutes)

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**1. Welcome and Introduction 5 minutes**

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- Opening music (“Dirt Made My Lunch”)
- Welcome group
- Introduce yourself
- Ask families to introduce themselves

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**2. Warm Up: *Dirt Made My Lunch* 5 minutes**

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- Refer to music: “Dirt Made My Lunch”
- Ask group: How does dirt make your lunch?
- Use pictures to discuss how milk, sandwich, apple, etc. are made
- Ask families about their gardening experience

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**3. Book Sharing: *Growing Vegetable Soup (A Sembrar Sopa De Verduras)* 10 minutes**

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- Read slowly, showing pictures
- Encourage participation from families
- Reinforce the value of reading together as family

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**4. Family Activity: Planting 10 minutes**

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**Demonstration**

- Show seeds on plate
- Discuss how seeds grow; what they need
- Demonstrate planting in container

**Plant Your Own**

- Invite children and parents to the planting area
- Provide containers, seeds and planting supplies
- Help each family to plant their own seeds (3 in each container)
- Discuss or assist with watering

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**5. Take Home the Learning 5 minutes**

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- Share information on community gardens
- Provide handouts to parents

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**6. Closing**

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- Thank the group for coming to the class
- Answer questions as needed

## 1.

Welcome  
and  
Introduction  
**5 minutes**

As families arrive, play the title song from *Dirt Made My Lunch (La Tierra y El Mar)* by Banana Slug String Band.

Introduce yourself and ask parents and children to introduce themselves.

*“Turn to the person next to you and talk about gardens together. What gardens have you seen? What did you notice about them?”*

Tell families the purpose of the class is to learn about growing vegetables and herbs at home so they have some delicious home grown foods to try.

Explain that children and parents will join together to do some reading, planting and sharing ideas during the session.

Post the overview on the wall.

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## 2.

Warm Up:  
*How Does  
Dirt Make  
Your Lunch?*  
**5 minutes**

**How Does Dirt Make Your Lunch?**

Show the container of dirt and a picture of a sandwich, an apple, and a glass of milk.

Ask the families, “How does dirt make your lunch?”

(Answers may vary:

lettuce and tomatoes grow in garden dirt,  
cows eat grasses and grains before they make milk,  
and so forth.)

Ask if anyone has grown fruits or vegetables at home – either in a container or in their yard.

Ask them to share their experience with the group.

“What do you grow?”

“Does your family like to eat the foods you grow?”

### 3.

#### Book Sharing 10 minutes

Introduce the book *Growing Vegetable Soup (A Sembrar Sopa De Verduras)* by Lois Ehlert — a story about seeds that turn into soup!

Encourage parents and children to sit where they are able to see and hear the story.

Read the story – showing the pictures to the children and parents as you go.

Take time to ask questions to the children about what they notice.

*Ideas for engaging children in the story:*

- “What are these gardening tools?”
- “How many potatoes are there?”
- “What color is this?”
- “Are the plants bigger or smaller now?”

If there are no children present in your class, show the book. Talk briefly with the adults about sharing books and telling stories. Note that sharing stories is a great way to help kids build skills –and it’s an enjoyable family activity. For example, it helps children learn about the world, allows them to try out ideas, and is a great time for snuggling.

After finishing the book, ask the children to help you understand how a seed grows. Read each of the following steps and ask the children to act out what is happening. Invite parents to act it out with their younger children.

- The seed is in the ground
- The seed sprouts
- The sprout gets sunshine and water
- It grows, and grows and grows
- It is ready to pick — a yummy fruit or vegetable to eat!

## 4.

### Family

### Activity:

### Planting

**10 minutes**

#### **A. Demonstrate Planting**

Walk around the room with a handful of the seeds in the small bowl. Hold them up one by one, and ask the children questions about the seeds.

Allow children over three years old to touch the seeds.

“What is this?”                      --- “A seed”

“What seeds were in the story?”

“What colors are these seeds?”

“Do you know what this seed is?”

“Which seed is big, which seed is little?”

Tell families that you are going to show them how to start a plant during the class. They will have a chance to grow this plant at home and eat it when it is ready.

Explain that it is possible to grow hearty plants in containers – even without a yard. Demonstrate each step while sharing the information.

#### **STEP 1. Choose a Container**

Key points to discuss:

- Pick a container that is big enough for the plant you choose to grow.
- Think about drainage. Plants need to be able to use water, but not too much water. The container should be waterproof.

To demonstrate:

Select a container. Options include:

- one gallon or half-gallon milk or water container
- plastic ice cream tubs
- five gallon water containers
- two pound yogurt containers

## 4. Family Activity (continued)

### B. Plant Your Own

Invite children and families to start a container plant they can take home.

Choose containers and small rocks for drainage.

Provide potting soil and seeds for planting, 3 seeds of one kind per pot.

For watering the plants, either:

- let children water the plants, with help, OR,
- if you are not using water, remind the group to water when the plant gets home.

## 5. Take Home the Learning 5 minutes

Ask the group:

“What do you think could be some ways for you to garden or to introduce your family to gardening?”

If you have a handout of community gardens in your neighborhood, show the group, and point out the phone numbers so they can call to participate.

Review other handouts:

- “Tips for Parents” (in English and/or Spanish)
- “Container Gardening – Four Easy Steps” (in English and/or Spanish)
- “Gardening Timeline” (in English and/or Spanish)

# Expanding and Adapting this Lesson

## 1. Use Other Books

*Oliver's Vegetables* by Vivian French is a useful book for those who prefer more of a story line than is offered in *Growing Vegetable Soup*. Oliver finds out he loves vegetables when he sees them grow in Grandpa's garden.

*I'm a Seed (Soy Una Semilla)* by Jean Marzollo shows how two seeds grow and one seed doesn't know it's turning into a pumpkin. Story has nice suspense but not a lot of detail about gardening.

*The Carrot Seed (La Semilla de Zanahoria)* by Ruth Krauss offers a short story about a boy growing a carrot even though no one believes it will grow. Shows how seeds need water and sunshine, but graphics are in black and white. Can be combined with some discussion about carrots and carrot recipes.

*Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens is a book that might be used with older children. It shows cooperation and gardening. It is a little longer than most books.

*Ugly Vegetables* by Grace Lin describes the gardening experience of a young Asian-American girl. The vegetables that her family grows are different from those in her neighbors' gardens, and she feels unhappy about the difference until she sees the delicious food that can be made from her garden. Her neighbors appreciate the food, too.

*We Can Eat the Plants* by Rozanne Williams shows how a boy in a garden enjoys eating different parts of the plants. You can play "Roots, Stems, Leaves" from the Banana Slug CD and do a session about different parts of plants you can eat.

*Tortilla Factory (La Tortilleria)* by Gary Paulsen shows how a corn seed becomes a tortilla in a cycle of life. You can grow corn together and share tortillas as part of the lesson.

**As an alternate idea, pick a seasonal vegetable or fruit theme, such as pumpkins or apples. Use a story such as "Too Many Pumpkins" by Linda White or "Manzanas" or "Calabazas" by Ann L. Burkhardt.**

## 2. Use a Felt Board

Use the enclosed colored pictures of growing things to construct these props:

- Print on sturdy paper if possible, and laminate.
- Attach hook/loop (eg. *Velcro*) fastener tape in several places to the back of each picture.
- Cut out the roots of the plant.
- Ask someone to put the plant on the board and as you talk about what plants need to grow, add the sun and the rain cloud. Add the roots to show the plant growing. You can use the water can to show indoor gardening.

## 3. Explore Organic gardening and Farming

Organic gardening and farming have been gaining more and more supporters and practitioners. However, families who are involved in agriculture may have strong feelings about crop growing practices.

Provide:

- information on what organic is
- information on which fruits and veggies are most loaded with pesticides
- information on sources for organic produce, (a good resource is the California Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF))

## 4. Use the Gardening Time Line Poster

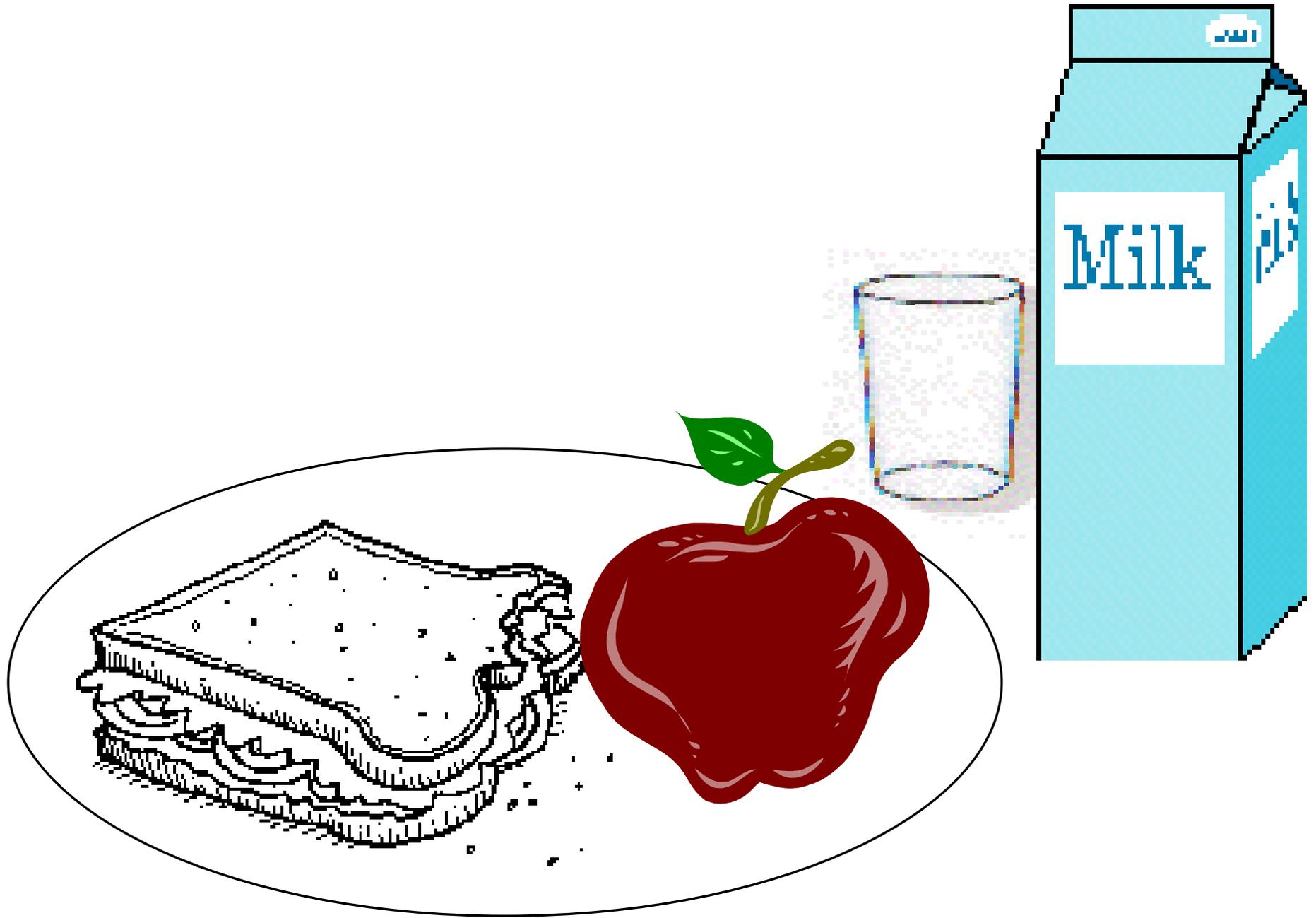
If planting outdoors, choosing the right season to start your plant is crucial. For children, a fast-growing seed is often most enjoyable to grow. Lettuce, carrots and radishes are fast growers.

With the group, look at the gardening time line (handout or poster on the wall). Notice what we can plant this month – talk to the group about what size of container or plot of ground is needed for that plant. How long will it take to grow to eating size?

# Materials for this Lesson

The following materials are provided:

- Picture of Sandwich, Milk and Apple
- Tips for Parents: Grow Your Own Garden (English)
- Tips for Parents: Grow Your Own Garden (Spanish)
- Grow Your Own 4 Easy Steps (English)
- Grow Your Own 4 Easy Steps (Spanish)
- Gardening Timeline (English)
- Gardening Timeline (Spanish)
- Feltboard Pictures





## TIPS FOR PARENTS

### Grow Your Own Garden

Today, we talked about growing vegetables. We did a few activities to help your children learn about good nutrition and to help them get ready for school. This sheet will give you some more ideas.

#### Today's Learning Activities:

- Listened to music about gardening: *Dirt Made My Lunch* by Banana Slug String Band
- Read *Growing Vegetable Soup* by Lois Ehlert
- Talked about why gardening helps families
- Planted a seed in a container for growing at home



#### How You Can Continue This Learning:

As a parent, you are your child's first teacher. You can help them learn more about gardening by doing some of the same activities we did today. You can also do some new ones. Here are some ideas:



#### Other Books You Might Read:

- *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss
- *Oliver's Vegetables* by Vivian French
- *I'm a Seed* by Jean Marzollo
- *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens
- *Ugly Vegetables* by Grace Lin

#### Other Activities:

- **Music:** "Garden Song" from Charlotte Diamond's *Ten Carrot Diamond* album or "Oats and Beans and Barley Grow" from Raffi's *Baby Beluga*
- **Science:** Sprout a seed in a clear jar, such as a baby food jar and put a moist towel and bean in. Leave the lid off. Put the jar on the window ledge and watch the bean grow. Parents will want to keep the towel moist.
- **Cooking:** Make vegies and dip, or soup or salad recipe using garden vegetables.
- **Physical Activity:** Dig a garden outside, pick berries at a farm, go to a pumpkin patch.
- **Math:** Put out different produce and have children put them together by color, size or shape. Count how many days it takes to grow your plant.
- **Social Studies/Geography:** Field Trip — go to a farm nearby and talk about how plants are grown.



## SUGERENCIAS PARA PADRES

### Cultive sus propias verduras

Hoy hablamos sobre cultivar verduras. Hicimos algunas actividades para ayudar a los niños a aprender sobre la buena nutrición y ayudarlos a prepararse para la escuela. Esta hoja les dará algunas otras ideas.

#### Actividades de aprendizaje de hoy:

- Escuchamos música sobre sembrar verduras: *La tierra me hizo el almuerzo* por Banana Slug String Band
- Leímos *Cómo cultivar sopa de verduras* por Lois Ehlert
- Hablamos sobre por qué sembrar verduras ayuda a las familias
- Sembramos una semilla en un recipiente para cultivar en la casa



#### Cómo pueden continuar este aprendizaje:

Como padres, son los primeros maestros de sus hijos. Los pueden ayudar a aprender más sobre sembrar verduras repitiendo algunas de las actividades que hicimos hoy. También pueden hacer algunas nuevas. A continuación, algunas ideas:



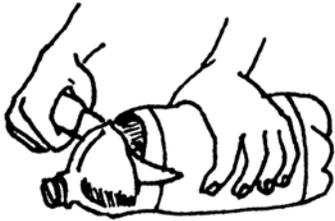
#### Otros libros que pueden leer:

- *La Semilla de Zanahoria* by Ruth Krauss
- *Soy Una Semilla* by Jean Marzollo
- *La Tortillería* by Gary Paulsen

#### Otras actividades:

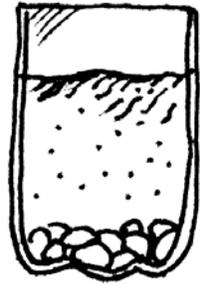
- **Música:** “Garden Song”, del álbum *Ten Carrot Diamond*, de Charlotte Diamond u “Oats and Beans and Barley Grow”, de *Baby Beluga*, de Raffi
- **Ciencia:** Hagan germinar una semilla en un frasco transparente, como un frasco de comida para bebés. Pongan dentro una toalla de papel húmeda y un frijol. Déjelo sin tapar. Pongan el frasco en el marco de la ventana y vean cómo crece el frijol. Los padres deben mantener húmeda la toalla de papel.
- **Cocina:** Preparen una receta de verduras y salsa o sopa o ensalada usando verduras frescas.
- **Actividad física:** Preparen la tierra afuera para sembrar, cosechen bayas en una granja, vayan donde cultivan calabazas.
- **Matemáticas:** Pongan diferentes verduras y hagan que los niños las separen por color, tamaño o forma. Cuenten cuántos días demora en crecer la planta que sembraron.
- **Estudios sociales y geografía:** Excursión – vayan a una granja cerca y hablen sobre cómo cultivan las plantas.

# Container Gardening Four Easy Steps

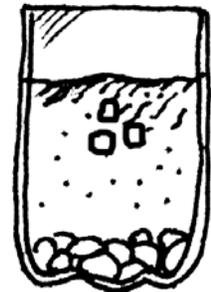


1. Make sure that your container is water proof. If it has a narrow top, cut it off so that it is wide enough.

2. Fill your container 2/3 or 3/4 of the way full with soil.



3. Plant your seeds, using two or three seeds for every plant you want to grow.



4. Gently water your plant until the soil is moist and place it in a spot that gets sun for at least half of the day. Water your plant when the soil gets too dry.



**If the container is.....**

6 to 8 inches, you can plant:

Radishes, beets, Swiss chard, turnips.

*Examples: Large butter, margarine or cottage cheese container, large soup can, bottom of a milk or water jug, plastic peanut butter jar.*



**If the container is.....**

8 to 10 inches, you can plant:

Green beans (bush variety), cabbage, collards, cucumbers (bush variety), eggplant, garlic, herbs, lettuce, onions, peas, peppers, spinach.

*Examples: large coffee can, bottom of a gallon milk or water jug, gallon ice cream container, large plastic jar.*



**If the container is.....**

10 to 12 inches, you can plant:

Broccoli, cauliflower, zucchini.

*Examples: bottom of a gallon milk or water jug, gallon size food cans, an old tire lined with a plastic trash bag.*

**If the container is.....**

12 or more inches, you can plant:

Green beans (vine variety), carrots, corn, cucumbers (vine variety), melons, potatoes, fall squashes, tomatoes.

*Examples: leaky cleaning bucket, five gallon plastic containers, a stack of two or three old tires lined with a plastic trash bag.*

**Preparing Your Container:**

Wash your container with soap and water. Then wash with diluted bleach. Rinse clean a few times before preparing and planting the seeds.



**Preparing Bleach Solution:**

Add 1 tablespoon bleach to 1 gallon of water.



# Cultivo en recipientes en cuatro pasos sencillos

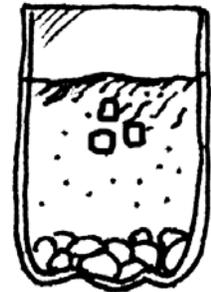


1. Verifique que su recipiente sea a prueba de agua. Si tiene un pico angosto, córtelo para que sea suficientemente ancho

2. Llene las 2/3 o las 3/4 partes del recipiente con tierra.



3. Plante sus semillas, usando dos o tres semillas por cada planta que desee cultivar.



4. Riegue su planta suavemente hasta que la tierra esté húmeda y póngala en un lugar en que le dé el sol al menos la mitad del día. Riegue su planta cuando la tierra se vea seca



**Si el recipiente es de...**

6 a 8 pulgadas, puede sembrar:  
rábanos, betabeles, acelga, nabos.

*Ejemplos: Recipiente grande de mantequilla, margarina o requesón, lata de sopa grande, la parte de abajo de un recipiente de leche o de agua, recipiente plástico de mantequilla de cacahuete.*



**Si el recipiente es de....**

8 a 10 pulgadas, puede sembrar:  
ejotes (variedad de arbusto), col, col rizada, pepino (variedad de arbusto), berenjena, ajo, hierbas aromáticas, lechuga, cebolla, chícharos, ajíes, espinaca.

*Ejemplos: lata de café grande, la parte de abajo de un recipiente de un galón de leche, agua o helado, bote grande de plástico.*



**Si el recipiente es de...**

10 a 12 pulgadas, puede sembrar:  
brócoli, coliflor, calabacín.

*Ejemplos: la parte de abajo de un galón de leche o de agua, latas de alimentos de un galón, un neumático viejo recubierto con una bolsa de basura de plástico.*

**Si el recipiente tiene...**

12 o más pulgadas, puede sembrar:  
ejotes verdes (de enredadera), zanahorias, elote, pepinos (de enredadera), melones, papas, calabaza de otoño, jitomates.

*Ejemplos: cubo limpio que gotea, recipientes de plástico de cinco galones, dos o tres neumáticos viejos apilados recubiertos con una bolsa de basura de plástico.*

**Cómo preparar su recipiente:**

Lave el recipiente con agua y jabón. Después lávelo con lejía diluida. Enjuáguelo bien varias veces antes de sembrar las semillas.



**Preparación de la solución de lejía:**

Añada 1 cucharada de lejía a 1 galón de agua.



# Gardening Time Line

Here is a list of seeds to plant outside each month:

## July/August/ September

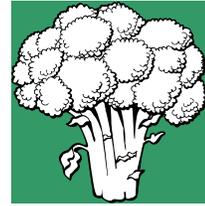


Broccoli  
Cabbage  
Lettuce  
Cauliflower  
Carrots  
Beets  
Spinach  
Onions  
Garlic



## October/ November

Garlic  
Broccoli  
Cabbage  
Onions



## December/January/February

Weed and Thin Container Gardens

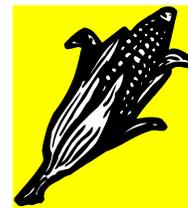
## March

Peppers  
Tomatoes  
Radishes  
Zucchini  
Melon



## May

Melon  
Radishes  
Corn  
Eggplant  
Zucchini



## April

Summer Squash  
Cucumbers  
Corn  
Eggplant  
Zucchini  
Melon

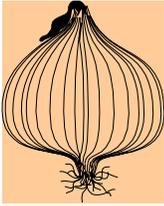
## June

Winter Squash  
Radishes  
Pumpkin  
Lima Beans  
Eggplant  
Melon

# Cuándo sembrar, desherbar y arrancar

A continuación, una lista de semillas para sembrar afuera cada mes:

## julio/agosto/ septiembre

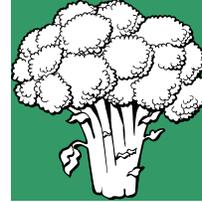


Brócoli  
Col  
Lechuga  
Coliflor  
Zanahoria  
Betabel  
Espinaca  
Cebolla  
Ajo



## octubre/ noviembre

Ajo  
Brócoli  
Col  
Cebolla



## diciembre/enero/febrero

Deshierbe y arranque las plantas de más en los recipientes

### marzo

Pimientos  
Jitomate  
Rábano



Calabacín  
Melón

### mayo

Melón  
Rábanos  
Elote



Berenjena  
Calabacín

### abril

Calabaza amarilla  
Pepinos  
Elote  
Berenjena  
Calabacín  
Melón

### junio

Calabaza de invierno  
Rábanos  
Calabaza  
Frijoles blancos  
Berenjena  
Melón

## Feltboard Pictures

Place the pictures for felt board activity in this way:

- Print on sturdy paper if possible, and laminate.
- Attach velcro in several places to the back of each picture.
- Cut out the roots to the plant at the bottom.

Ask someone to put the plant on the board and as you talk about what plants need to grow, add the sun and the rain cloud and add the roots to show the plant growing or use the plant with the roots as your demo plant.

You can use the water can to show indoor gardening.

