

Garden Scientists: Adult Introduction

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With all science, observing patterns and making connections fosters creative and critical thinking. This is no different for children. This guide is tailored for young children interested in the garden and collecting observation data to understand their unique situation and find correlations between their connections.

WHY OBSERVATION MATTERS

Observation is one of the most important skills in science. When we watch plants grow, we learn that living things change over time and respond to their environment. This experience builds early science skills such as:

- Asking questions
- Noticing patterns and changes
- Comparing and measuring
- Recording information
- Making predictions

Garden observations also support literacy, math and art by encouraging writing, counting, measuring and drawing.

GETTING STARTED WITH OBSERVATIONS

To create a positive learning experience:

- Choose fast-growing plants such as radishes, beans, lettuce, sunflowers or herbs. These show noticeable changes quickly.
- Set a daily or weekly routine for observations.
- Use simple tools such as rulers, clipboards and crayons, accompanied by our observation sheets.

- Allow hands-on interaction, when appropriate, such as gently touching leaves or smelling plants, like herbs and flowers.

Explain that observations should be gentle and respectful to keep plants healthy.

When encouraging the child to make connections between their observations, avoid giving answers too quickly. Let children share ideas and discoveries. They may even teach you something that had not occurred to you!

RECORDING WHAT CHILDREN SEE

Record Observations

Recording observations helps children remember and reflect. Choose methods based on age and ability. Our observation sheet highlights multiple ways to record observations. Children can:

- Draw pictures of the plant
- Color leaves or flowers accurately
- Write words or short sentences
- Measure plant height with rulers or blocks
- Use checklists or simple charts

Use Your Senses

Encourage children to use safe senses, when appropriate, for exploring plants through:

- Sight (color, size, shape)
- Touch (texture of leaves or stems)
- Smell (herbs or flowers)

Connect Observations to Plant Needs

Use observations to discuss what plants need to grow including:

- Sunlight
- Water
- Air
- Nutrients from soil

Consider Changes

To introduce cause-and-effect relationships, ask children to connect changes they see to care practices such as:

- What happens if a plant does not get enough water?
- Why do plants lean toward sunlight?

ENCOURAGING RESPONSIBILITY AND CARE

Observation activities also teach responsibility. Explain to the children that healthy plants grow better when cared for properly.

Assign Small Tasks

Children can be responsible for:

- Watering plants
- Checking soil moisture
- Watching for insects
- Removing weeds (with guidance)

Safety and Garden Etiquette

Responsibility also includes safety! What are the correct measures to ensure the best environment for our gardener and the growing plants? Establishing garden rules helps create a safe learning environment. Remember to:

- Wash hands after garden activities
- Use child-safe tools
- Watch for insects and avoid touching unknown plants
- Follow adult instructions

LEARNING OUTCOMES

When children follow these steps while observing plant growth, they will understand plant development and the environment while building confidence and developing respect for our planet. By creating this foundation, children build critical thinking skills that extend far beyond the garden. Through asking questions and making connections, they learn how to think scientifically. This includes analyzing information, solving problems and drawing conclusions based on evidence. These skills support success across all areas of learning, including reading, mathematics, social interactions and creative expression. Children will nurture curiosity, independence and a lifelong appreciation for learning and discovery.

Happy exploring!



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