



Seasonal Food & Gardening for the Early Years

BOOK
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Growing Harvesting Preparing Sharing





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Activities and the Early Years Learning Framework

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

Source: Australian Government Department of Education and Training, <https://www.education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>

This book has been written to support educators working with the practices and principles of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). The following table will help you plan your kitchen and garden activities according to the EYLF Learning Outcomes. Most activities also include inquiry questions for educators to use as a starting point with children.

ACTIVITY

	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 4	Outcome 5
A Broken-Pot Garden, p 92			X	X	
Bring on the Rain, p 85	X	X		X	
Disappearing Puddles, p 88		X	X	X	
Do Leaves Breathe?, p 67		X		X	
Egg Carton Seed-Raising Pots, p 41		X		X	
Eggs-ploring Floating and Sinking, p 37				X	X
Exceptional Strength, p 38		X		X	
Food from Home, p 24	X	X			
Food Journeys, p 25		X	X		
Growing Bok Choy from Scraps, p 97		X		X	
Growing up from the Soil, p 50			X		X
Harvesting Sunflower Seeds, p 71		X		X	
Make a Rain Gauge, p 84		X		X	X
Make a Scarecrow, p 99				X	X
Make Clay Fossils, p 61		X	X	X	
Making Rainbows, p 81		X	X	X	
Matching Seeds to Produce, p 29			X	X	X

	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 4	Outcome 5
My Placemat, p 26	X	X	X		
Observing Decomposition, p 57		X		X	
Observing Soil Life, p 59		X		X	
Plant Corn like an Incan Farmer!, p 74		X		X	X
Potatoes Underground, p 52		X	X		
Rain in a Jar, p 78		X		X	X
Recycled Bottle Planters, p 93		X		X	
Recycled Seed Paper, p 95				X	
Shadow Sundial, p 73		X		X	
Soil Scientists, p 51		X		X	
Super Seeds, p 55		X		X	
Terrific Tomatoes, p 68		X	X	X	
Time for a Picnic!, p 30	X	X			X
Weather Forecasters, p 79		X		X	X
What Animals Lay Eggs?, p 36				X	X



Observing Soil Life

EYLF Outcomes

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

Key Words

bugs, habitat, insects, magnifying glass, mini-beast, soil



EXTENSION: Take photos and record the findings on a chart. Conduct this activity every few weeks and compare the findings over time.

VARIATION: Try this experiment using a heat lamp. Place an old colander into a box, fill it with soil from the garden and place it under the lamp. Wearing oven mitts, hold the colander over the box – as the soil heats up, insects should wriggle out of the holes in the colander and drop into the box. You could use a thermometer to take the soil temperature, and discuss how the heat has affected the soil and why the insects are wriggling away from the heat and light.

Soil is home to many living things. The healthier the soil, the more life it will contain. This sensory activity encourages children to observe mini-beasts and learn about the different ways in which they contribute to the garden, like processing the soil, hunting and eating insect pests and pollinating flowers.

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- > How can you tell if your soil is healthy?
- > What types of soil are there?
- > Where can you find mini-beasts in the garden?
- > Why do you think it's important to release the mini-beasts back into their habitat?
- > Which insects are beneficial for our plants and vegetables?



RESOURCES

- gardening gloves
- trowels
- soil from the garden
- buckets
- white cloth sheets or butcher's paper
- magnifying glass



WHAT TO DO

- Using a trowel, dig up some soil samples and place them in the buckets. Take samples from different areas of the garden, for instance from a shaded and moist area of the garden, as well as from a more exposed and dry part of the garden.
- Take the soil from the buckets and tip them carefully onto the sheet or the paper.
- Gently sort through the soil. What can you see? Are there any living creatures? Use a magnifying glass to look at the creatures more closely.
- Compare the different soil samples. Are there more mini-beasts in the moist soil? What do you think they do in the soil?
- Carefully return the soil and mini-beasts to the garden.

Terrific Tomatoes

EYLF Outcomes

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

Key Words

colour, flavour, seed, shape, size, smell, sort, taste, texture, tomatoes, touch, variety



TIP: Technically, a tomato is the fruit of the tomato plant – but it is used as a vegetable in cooking. Fruits are the part of flowering plants that contain the seeds, and vegetables are the other edible parts of the plants.

EXTENSION: Cook a tomato dish (see pages 69 and 70)!

Tomato plants love the sun, and require around 8 hours of sunlight each day. In this activity children touch, smell and taste a variety of tomatoes, and learn that one fruit or vegetable can come in many shapes, sizes, flavours, textures and colours. Collect different tomatoes (ideally from your garden), and include varieties of common tomatoes, Roma tomatoes and cherry tomatoes.

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- > Is the tomato a fruit or a vegetable? (See Tip box)
- > Do all fruits contain seeds on the inside?
- > Do you think tomatoes are sweet or savoury?
- > Where in the garden would be the best place to grow tomatoes?



RESOURCES

- different varieties of tomatoes

WHAT TO DO

- Look at the different types of tomatoes. Pick them up and feel and smell them. Talk about their similarities and differences (their size, shape, colour, smell, texture, etc.).
- Sort the tomatoes in size order, from smallest to largest. Talk about how a fruit or vegetable, like a tomato, can come in many different varieties, but they are all part of the same family.
- Cut the tomatoes open. What do you see? How many seeds do you think there are?
- Taste the tomatoes. What do they taste like? Do they all taste the same?
- Talk about the different ways you can use tomatoes in cooking (you can use them fresh, cooked, in sauces), and what dishes you might find them in.



Harvesting Sunflower Seeds

EYLF Outcomes

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

Key Words

bloom, flower head, harvest, petal, picking, saving seeds, sunflower



This is a great activity if you have a sunflower grove in your garden. Sunflowers should be ready to harvest once the back of the flower head turns yellow and the petals become dry and begin to fall. In this activity, children enjoy harvesting, seed-collecting and seed-saving.

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- > Do all flowers produce seeds?
- > Do some flowers only produce one seed, while others produce many?
- > In what ways can we sort and categorise these sunflower seeds?



RESOURCES

- paper bags and string
- bucket or tray
- fork or spoon (optional)
- colander



WHAT TO DO

- In order to harvest the seeds, the sunflower heads must be completely dry. This can happen naturally in a warm and dry climate, but it's best to protect them from birds and other animals by putting a paper bag over the heads and tying them closed.
- Alternatively, cut the heads off (about 20–30 cm below the bloom), cover with paper bags (so they can collect any falling seeds) and hang them upside down somewhere dry and well ventilated.
- Once the heads are dry, it's time to scrape out the seeds! Put down trays or buckets and scrape the seeds out with your fingers, or use a fork or spoon.
- The seeds can be washed and eaten, or lightly toasted in the oven (see page 72).



LATER: Sunflower seeds can be saved for planting the following year. Store them in a sealed envelope and keep it in an airtight plastic container. Store in a cool, dry place until you're ready to plant.

EXTENSION: To develop numeracy, children can count, sort and categorise the sunflower seeds into seed packets. The packets can then be decorated and labelled, which develops art and literacy. The children can either take the seeds home or sell them to raise funds for the kitchen garden at your service.

Corn Fritters

Season: Summer/Autumn

Makes: 30 tastes or 6 serves at home

Fresh from the garden: corn, eggs, red capsicum, red onion

These simple fritters are tasty and crunchy, with the warm pop of fresh corn kernels making them a delight for children. Try them with a homemade tomato sauce.

NOTE: To make buttermilk out of plain milk, stir in 1 tablespoon of lemon juice or vinegar into 1 cup of milk, and let stand for 5 to 10 minutes.

EQUIPMENT

metric measuring scales and spoons
clean tea towel
chopping board
cook's knife
large mixing bowl
wooden spoon
large frying pan
metal spatula
kitchen paper
heatproof plate or baking tray

INGREDIENTS

200 g plain flour
350 g instant polenta
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
400 ml buttermilk
3 eggs
salt and white pepper, to taste
600 g fresh corn kernels
1 red onion, diced finely
1 small red capsicum, diced finely
olive oil or grape seed oil

WHAT TO DO

- Preheat the oven to 150°C (or its lowest setting).
- Prepare all of the ingredients based on the instructions in the ingredients list.
- Mix the flour, polenta, bicarbonate of soda, buttermilk, eggs, salt and pepper in a large bowl to make a batter.
- Stir the fresh corn kernels, onion and capsicum into the batter.
- Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in the frying pan over a medium heat.
- Pour a tablespoon of batter into the hot pan to make a fritter. Depending on the size of the pan, cook 4 or 5 fritters at a time – but don't overcrowd the pan, and leave enough room to flip the fritters.
- Gently fry each side of the fritters until firm and golden, turning over with the spatula.
- Remove cooked fritters from the pan and drain on kitchen paper.
- Place each batch of cooked fritters on a heatproof plate or baking tray and put into the preheated oven to keep warm.
- Continue cooking the rest of the batter using the same process.



Bok Choy with Oyster Sauce

Season: All

Makes: 30 tastes or 6 serves at home

Fresh from the garden: bok choy, garlic

Source: Adapted from a recipe by Apollo Bay Primary School

EQUIPMENT

metric measuring scales and spoons
clean tea towel
chopping board
cook's knife
large saucepan
colander
large frying pan
wooden spoon
serving dish

INGREDIENTS

1 kg bok choy, washed and bases removed
2 tsp sesame oil
2 garlic cloves, crushed and chopped roughly
2 tbsp oyster sauce
2 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp sesame seeds

WHAT TO DO

- Fill a large saucepan with water and bring to the boil. Prepare all of the ingredients based on the instructions in the ingredients list.
- Carefully add the bok choy to the boiling water and bring back to the boil. Cook for 2–3 minutes, then drain. Run cold water over the cooked bok choy to refresh.
- Heat the sesame oil in a frying pan over a medium-low heat. Put the garlic in the oil and cook until just starting to brown.
- Add the oyster and soy sauce and cook until the sauce starts to bubble and thicken.
- Arrange the bok choy on the serving dish. Carefully distribute the thickened sauce over the bok choy
- Serve sprinkled with sesame seeds.

