



**Cymru**  
National Day Nurseries Association

# Factsheet



## Foundation Phase Activity - Gardening Project

Wales

# Foundation Phase - Gardening project

Young children are very curious to learn about the environment that surrounds them and being in the garden provides them with the opportunity to explore different smells, senses and tastes. The garden also encourages physical activity, which is fundamental in the development of movement skills. Unlike sports and some physical activities, a food-growing garden encourages children to make simple movements like crawling, lifting and digging which can improve their agility, balance and co-ordination.

Don't be put off if you only have a small space - There are a number of ways to grow with little or no space, whether you use hanging / wall mounted containers, large pots or grow bags, you can grow something almost anywhere.

## Learning objectives

- To experience different sensory explorations and begin to develop levels of co-ordination and control needed to use tools effectively
- Prepare the garden area for growing and plant seeds.

## Areas of learning (range and skills)

### Physical development

#### Range:

- Exploring and investigating their indoor and outdoor learning environments
- Developing their gross and fine motor skills through practical activities and use of varied tools, equipment and apparatus
- Being involved in physical activities that allow them to work as individuals, with a partner and in small groups, sharing ideas and helping each other to improve their work.

#### Skills:

- Develop gross motor skills
- Develop fine manipulative skills
- Use and handle a range of tools.

**Literacy** - e.g. writing lists; writing plant labels and signs; reading growing instructions; rhymes; stories; reference materials etc.

**Numeracy** - e.g. counting; measuring; comparing sizes; calculating the weight of soil / water, length of canes and strings etc.

## Resources

### Essential:

- Seeds (ask parents and the local community to donate plants, cuttings and seeds)
- Potting compost
- Plant labels (make plant markers from lolly sticks)
- A water supply - ideally a hose pipe or large water butt and / or watering cans and buckets for children, to be able to transport water to different parts of the garden
- Child-sized hand tools – trowels, spades, dustpan and brush
- Mark making tools – chalk, charcoal, crayons, brushes, pencils
- Hand-washing facilities - encourage children to wash their hands when they are finished and always before eating and drinking.

### Desirable:

- Child-sized long-handled tools for digging, raking and sweeping
- Child-sized wheelbarrows
- Children's gardening gloves (to avoid scratches and pricks, not to avoid getting dirty)
- Somewhere to wash mud from wellies, tools and equipment too
- Raised beds - plants are positioned at a child friendly height and are not in danger of being trampled.

## Activity outline

All learning opportunities should be planned with the children's individual needs, interests and learning characteristics in mind:

- Discuss with children, 'What are the children's favourite meals?' to help to inform what you may grow in your garden
- Use reference books and site visits to garden centres (if possible) to discover what plants need in order to grow and understand: the lifecycles of plants, the seasons, the weather and recycling through your gardening projects.
- Do some research on what seeds and plants grow best in your local soil and if there is a specific time of the year that works best.
  - You will want to try to ensure success to avoid disappointment, although non-growth can also promote discussion with older children.

## Continued and enhanced provision.

- Begin by introducing the tools to the children with guidance on how to use them safely
- Share the goal and encourage them to help prepare the soil
- Place resources in organised storage areas and encourage the children to retrieve them
  - Marked shelves and containers will also help children to return cleaned equipment after use too
- Provide the children with a variety of ways to be physically active: digging, lifting, carrying, pushing wheelbarrows and watering
- Support the children to take turns, share tools, resources, and work as part of a team to achieve a goal together.

Most of the play should be open-ended for children to explore physical movement in the garden. Do not be afraid of long periods of time spent exploring the garden. It will only allow children to develop their skills further and also help to increase engagement levels through ownership.

## Focused task

- In smaller groups, allow children to plant their own seeds, either purchased by them on a site visit or seeds of plants discussed in conversations prior to the activity
  - **Remember to include allergies and children eating seeds etc. within your activity risk assessment**
- Depending on the plant, some seeds can be planted straight into a bed and others require a smaller pot initially. Ask children to choose their space in the plot, or their own pot
- Encourage the children to retrieve the compost as a group, in order to fill their pots
- Encourage children to try using both hands at the same time. Use the trowel to fill their pot with soil with one hand whilst holding the pot with the other
- Encourage children to use scissors to open their seed packets
- Ask children to explore the soil and make a hole for the seed
- Ask children to squeeze and push down the soil over the hole to protect the seed
- Encourage children to collect some water for their seed and take their time and discuss the need to be careful not to over water
- Support children to create labels for their seeds
  - These can be group names or individual names
- Discuss with the children how plants need time to grow
  - Some plants may grow fairly quickly or not all
  - What else might the seed need to grow?

- Help children to decide where to place their pot
  - You may wish to develop observational skills through measuring and recording the growth over time through drawings or numbers.

## Welsh language development

yr ardd - the garden

cloddio – dig

tyfu - grow

hadau – seeds

can ddyfrio – watering can

brwsh – brush

trywel – trowel

llawn – full

pibell – hose

pridd – soil

gwag - empty

rhaw - spade

## Assessment opportunities

- Fine manipulation
- Using scissors and tools.

### Extension activities

Explore the fruit and vegetables of what you have grown or are trying to grow within your garden. You can incorporate the fruit and vegetables from your harvest into cooking / tasting activities.

- Give children appropriate knives to chop fruit and vegetables themselves
- Cut open different fruit, what's inside?
  - Offer magnifying glasses to help look at seeds - tomatoes and peppers are great for this!
  - Can children retrieve seeds from fruit and vegetables to try and begin the growing process again?

Go out into your community to support gardening projects. Visit your local care home, help tidy up the garden, and take some of your home grown plants to share.

## Further support and NDNA resources

- [Healthy Body, Happy Me resources](#)
- [Physical activity and active play in early years](#) – myNDNA tip
- [Physical development top tips – Wales](#) - factsheet
- [Learning about vegetables](#) – myNDNA activity
- [Beans, beans and more beans](#) – myNDNA activity
- [Super sunflowers activity guide](#) – myNDNA activity
- The FPEN Zone on Hwb - [Our Green World](#)
  - A series of Our Green World themed interactive resources which address all seven areas of learning within the Foundation Phase.

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# Factsheet

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We are the voice of the 21,000-strong nursery sector, an integral part of the lives of more than a million young children and their families. We provide information, training and advice to support nurseries and the 250,000 people who work in them to deliver world-class early learning and childcare.

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