

COMPASSION FLOWER GARDEN GUIDE

PLANT THE SEEDS OF COMPASSION

Mrs. **MEYER'S**
CLEAN DAY

+

kids
GARDENING.ORG
HELPING YOUNG MINDS GROW

+



Little
GreenThumbs
plant / grow / eat / share /



Introduction

Grab your garden hat and gloves, and **HELP US PLANT SEEDS of COMPASSION** with the kids in your life!

We're gardeners at Mrs. Meyer's Clean Day. We know the **POWER** of **PLANTS** to change the world. Blooming flowers and fresh fruits and vegetables provide us with more than beauty and food—they bring us benefits like **HOPE, JOY, and PEACE**, too. We know that with each seed we plant, we also cultivate kindness, love, and understanding. Gardening offers so many opportunities for us to **MAKE OUR WORLD** a better place to **LIVE and GROW**.

HOW GARDENS HELP GROW COMPASSION

It is never too early to introduce kids to the importance of compassion, and gardening is the perfect hands-on learning tool to help you do it.

- As they plan their garden, children learn to observe the world around them, creatively overcome challenges, and see possibility in all circumstances.
- As they plant seeds, kids learn to be patient and hopeful.
- Caring for their young plants shows them how to meet the needs of living things and take responsibility for the wellbeing of others.
- Harvesting the fruits of their labour brings joy and helps them see the value of hard work.
- Sharing their harvest gives them a chance to show generosity and express gratitude.
- Pride in their accomplishments allows their self-confidence to soar.

Most importantly, a garden demonstrates how all the living and non-living elements in our environment are intricately interconnected, and it shows what we can accomplish when we work together.

HOW GARDENS HELP GROW COMPASSION

We created the Compassion Flower Garden Guide to inspire you to embark on garden adventures with the kids in your life and to begin planting the seeds of compassion in your home and community.

There are six projects. Each pairs a compassion-related life lesson with a simple garden activity to help kids experience the concept in a practical, real-life way. Although we named them Weeks 1–6, feel free to do the projects on your own schedule, in any order you like.

Each project also includes a follow-up activity that kids can share with family, friends, and other members of your community. As kids spread the message of love and compassion, they learn that through one kind, green act at a time, together we can grow a more compassionate world!

COMPASSION FLOWER GARDEN PROJECTS:

WEEK 1 COMPASSION

Kids will explore ways to express compassion by learning how our gardens and green spaces can be designed to provide homes for a wide diversity of living creatures.

Activity: Wildlife Scavenger Hunt

Extended Activity: Plant a Butterfly Garden

WEEK 2 TEAMWORK

Everything works better when we do it together! Kids will learn the value of teamwork as they investigate the importance of pollinators in the garden.

Activity: Be the Bee Game

Extended Activity: Make Pollinator Seed Balls

WEEK 3 KINDNESS

As givers and receivers of kind acts, kids learn just how much kindness matters in our world. The garden offers lots of opportunities for kids to share kindness with others.

Activity: Homemade Bird Feeders

Extended Activity: Make New Plants from Old Plants

WEEK 4 FRIENDSHIP

Our friendships help us understand compassion and bring joy and laughter to our lives. Friends come in all shapes and sizes and can even include leafy green pals!

Activity: Plant Pals

Extended Activity: Make a Green Friendship Fort

WEEK 5 GENEROSITY

Generosity doesn't have to involve giving things; it can be about giving of yourself in other ways, such as offering your time or effort to someone. This can be just as meaningful — if not more so! — than a gift of something you purchased.

Activity: Garden Gift Certificates

Extended Activity: Make a Container Garden

WEEK 6 GRATITUDE

Expressing appreciation and thanks to others for their kindness is how we close the loop of compassion. Kids can create fun and beautiful gifts from the garden to express their gratitude.

Activity: Pressed Flower Thank You Cards

Extended Activity: Make Seed Paper Cards



WEEK 1 COMPASSION

Summary

Kids will explore ways to express compassion by learning how our gardens and green spaces can be designed to provide homes for a wide diversity of living creatures.

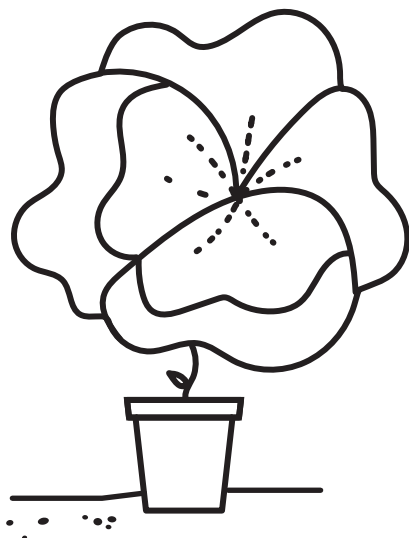
Overview

We show compassion for others when we help those in need. Showing compassion is a two-step process. First, we must identify the needs of others, and second, we must take actions to help them meet those needs.

Use your garden or a local green space to help kids hone their compassion skills by learning about the animals that live there, and then discovering ways to plan and plant garden spaces to meet their needs. From flying birds soaring overhead to worms wiggling below our feet, gardens and green spaces are habitat for a diversity of animal life. Natural areas and well-designed gardens provide all the elements living creatures need to survive, including air, water, food, and shelter/nesting sites.

Animals commonly found in a green space or garden include spiders, worms, butterflies, lady bugs, beetles, pill bugs, bees, ants, birds, and squirrels. Garden elements that help meet their needs include:

- Plants that release oxygen into the air
- Rain, natural elements like ponds and streams, and man-made sources that provide water
- Plant parts, other insects/animals, and human-provided foods that offer nourishment
- Trees, rocks, and soil that serve as shelter and nesting sites



WILDLIFE SCAVENGER HUNT

In this activity, kids observe and record your garden's residents by conducting a wildlife scavenger hunt, looking for both common garden inhabitants and evidence of the elements they need to survive. (If you don't have a garden available, a local park or green space works great too.)

Materials

- [Compassion Flower Wildlife Scavenger Hunt Worksheet](#) (print out a copy for each child or pull up on a device)
- Clipboard or piece of cardboard with paper clips to support paper
- Pencil, crayon, marker, or pen

Estimated Time to Complete

15-30 minutes

Instructions

Read and discuss the book *A Place to Grow* by Stephanie Bloom

For this activity, choose a day with comfortable weather and a relaxed schedule. Print out a Compassion Flower Scavenger Hunt Worksheet for each child and attach it to a clipboard or piece of cardboard to provide a sturdy writing surface. If you do not have a printer available, you can also call it up on an electronic device as an alternative.

1. Start by asking kids, Who lives in our garden and/or green space? Help them generate a list of what kinds of creatures they think they might find. What do these creatures need to live? Can our garden help them meet their needs?
2. Explain that they'll be heading outdoors soon and set the stage with a few tips for observation:
 - We are going to respect all life in the garden. We will observe living creatures with our eyes, not our hands.
 - Let's use quiet voices and gentle feet so we don't scare off the animals.
 - Remember to look in hidden places like in the soil and under leaves and rocks. Replace rocks and leaves when you're done.
3. Have kids grab their favorite writing implements.
4. Head outdoors and start the search for wildlife and the elements that meet their needs. Let them know how much time they'll have, for example 15 or 30 minutes.* If you would like help identifying anything you see, the app Seek by iNaturalist is a useful tool to help with plant and animal ID. More details are available about it at: https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/seek_app.
5. At the end of the hunt, gather kids and prompt them to share what they found with questions, such as, What did you find in the garden that you expected to see? What surprised you? Keep a list of the creatures they report and ask, How many different types of animals did we find? Did our garden (or green space) provide all of the elements these animals need to survive? Is there anything we could add to our space to help meet their needs?

Bring the conversation back to the **SUBJECT** of **COMPASSION**. **REMIN**D THEM that compassion is a two-step **PROCESS**. This activity represents the first step of identifying the **NEEDS OF OTHERS**, and considering ways to help.

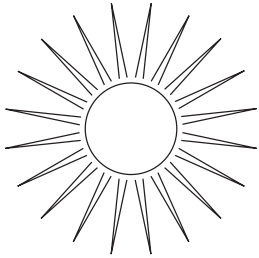


**Note: You can follow up by visiting the garden/green space at different times of the day to see if time, temperature, and sunlight impact what they see.*





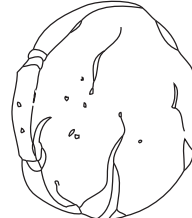
WILDLIFE SCAVENGER HUNT



Sun



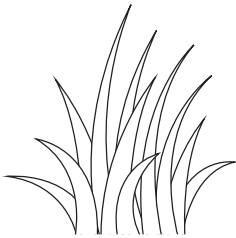
Leaf



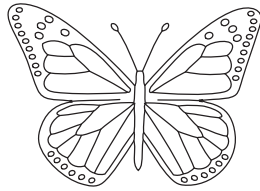
Rock



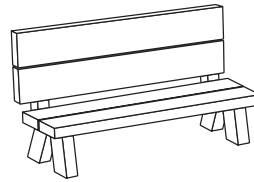
Ant



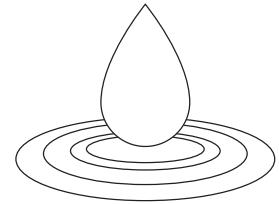
Grass



Butterfly



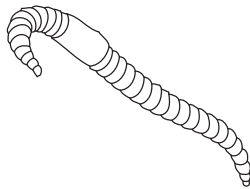
Bench



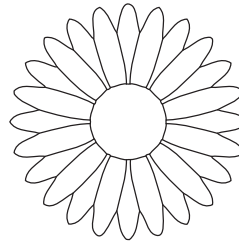
Water



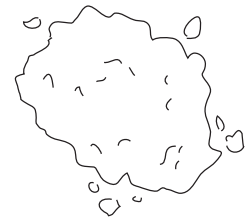
Squirrel



Worm



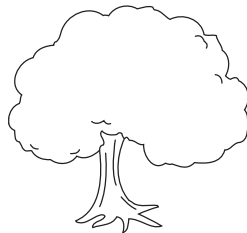
Flower



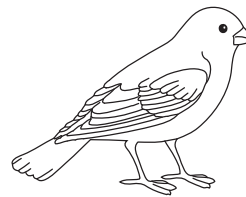
Soil



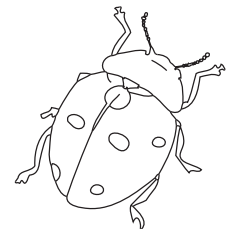
Cloud



Tree



Bird



Ladybug

DIRECTIONS: Place an "X" over the animals and elements for life you find in your garden or green space.

EXTENDED ACTIVITY: PLANT A BUTTERFLY GARDEN

Kids love butterflies! Encourage their connection to the natural world and foster compassion by letting kids help provide for the needs of these winged wonders.

Elements of a successful butterfly garden include:

- **Food sources (host plants):** Adult butterflies thrive on nectar, a sugary substance produced by flowers. Choose a variety of plants with colourful, nectar-rich flowers, with a focus on flowers that are native to your region. The insects' larval stages (caterpillars) munch on foliage — and most species are fussy eaters and will consume only one or a few types of plants. Monarch caterpillars, for example, eat only milkweed leaves. Have kids research butterflies that are native to your region to discover what plants their larvae eat. Kids will learn about the life cycle of a butterfly, and hopefully view each stage of growth — egg, caterpillar (larva), pupa, and adult. As they learn about the needs of butterflies, they'll discover the intricate relationships among plants and animals.
- **Water:** Include a water source, such as shallow pools and birdbaths as well as mud puddles, which provide important minerals.
- **Shelter:** Butterflies need a place to rest, hide from predators, and escape wind and rain. Trees, shrubs, tall grasses, and piles of rocks and/or brush all provide protection.

By including these elements, your garden will not only attract butterflies, but will also act as a beacon for hummingbirds, pollinators, and beneficial insects.

As kids participate in this activity, remind them that by observing any creature (insect, animal, human), determining its needs, and taking actions to help them meet those needs, they are practicing compassion.

For more detailed instructions about planning a butterfly garden visit: <https://kidsgardening.org/garden-activities-plant-a-butterfly-garden/>

Suggested Books:

Lessons from Mother Earth by Elaine McLeod

A story about a young girl visiting her grandmother's garden. She learns that if you take care of the plants that are growing and learn about them, you will always find something to nourish you. This story demonstrates the First Nations' tradition of taking care of Mother Earth.

Isabella's Garden by Glenda Millard

This story tells the tale of growth and change in Isabella's beautiful garden - the flourishing of plants, the coming and going of the animals, insects and seasons.

A Place to Grow by Stephanie Bloom

Follow Tiny Seed's journey to find just the right home.

Planting the Trees of Kenya—The Story of Wangari Maathai by Claire Nivola

Based on a true story, learn what happens when a group of dedicated people set out to change their world.

Bea's Bees by Katherine Pryor

Discover how we can be compassionate to wildlife through our gardens and green spaces.

Additional Resources:

Seek by iNaturalist: https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/seek_app
An app to help you identify plants and animals.

Compassion Flower Scavenger Hunt Worksheet

Place an "X" over the animals and elements for life you find in your garden or green space.

Use this page as inspiration for the Compassion Flower Scavenger Hunt:

<https://kidsgardening.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/KGN-ScavengerHunt-2.pdf>

Possible scavenger hunt squares:

Animals:

spiders, worms, butterflies, lady bugs, beetles, pill bugs, bees, ants, birds, and squirrels

Possible garden elements:

Air: show a cloud or wind gust

Water: raindrop, water puddle, hose

Food: plant leaves, fruit, flowers, grass, bird feeder/seeds

Shelter: trees, soil, rocks, nest



WEEK 2 TEAMWORK

Summary

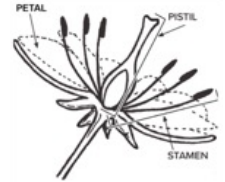
Everything works better when we do it together! Kids will learn the value of teamwork as they investigate the importance of pollinators in the garden.

Overview

Working as a team can have amazing results and sometimes there are things we just can't accomplish on our own. Learning how to work with others is an important life skill, and a garden can help kids learn value of teamwork. The process of pollination is a perfect example. In nature, flowering plants team up with animals we call pollinators to be able to make their fruits and seeds. In this lesson, kids will investigate how these plants and animals work together to keep life going.

Why do plants have flowers? Flowers have one very important job: to make seeds. Seeds grow into new plants and ensure that we have plenty of plants living in our environment. Although flowers on different plants may not resemble each other, they all have certain parts, including:

- **Petals:** The often-colourful structures that surround the seed-making parts.
- **Stamens:** The parts that make pollen — tiny grains that contain one type of reproductive cell and are often yellow in colour.
- **Pistil:** The part that contains the other type of reproductive cell and the place where the seeds form.



To make seeds, pollen from the stamens must be moved to the pistil. In some cases, the pollen moves with the help of wind or water. However, for many plants, the flower needs animals like bees or butterflies to move its pollen to a pistil. These animal/insects are called pollinators, and the process is called pollination.

One out of every three bites of food we eat depends on a pollinator!

Why do pollinators visit flowers? To feed on their sweet nectar (and sometimes some of the pollen). As they sip, pollen grains adhere to their bodies, and when they move from flower to flower, some of this pollen is transferred. Successful pollination results in the development of fruits and seeds.

This partnership is beneficial to both pollinators and plants. Pollinators get food, and plants get help making fruits and seeds. Since plants are an important source of oxygen, food, and shelter, all animals benefit from this result.

To get kids excited about pollination teamwork, play the following game.



BE THE BEE ACTIVITY

In Be the Bee, kids pretend to be bees collecting pollen from flowers to take to their hive to feed their young. By altering the number of bees, the movement of the bees, and the number of flowers available, you can show kids how these factors impact the work of pollinators. This activity works best with groups of three or more kids (or adults) to be bees.

Materials

- Chart paper
- Marker
- Timer
- 4 or 5 buckets or boxes
- Paper
- Tape
- Styrofoam balls or pompoms (optional)

Estimated Time to Complete

30 minutes

Instructions

1. Set up the game. Collect 5 to 10 boxes or buckets. Assign one box/bucket to represent the hive and then decorate the others to represent flowers. Crunch up paper into balls to represent pollen. You can also use Styrofoam balls or pompoms.*
2. Set the flowers around a large room or outdoors. Place the pollen balls in approximately equal numbers in each container. Then place your hive at a moderate distance away.
3. Tell your kids that they are going to be “bees” and when the timer starts, they need to go out and collect “pollen” grains one at a time and bring them back to the hive. You can encourage wing flapping and buzzing to add to the fun.
4. For the first round, give them 30 seconds and at the end of that time count how much pollen they collected and record the results on a piece of chart paper.
5. Return the pollen to the flowers at their original location. Follow up with a few more rounds demonstrating different factors that may impact pollinator populations. You can choose from the following situations (in any order) or devise your own:

To demonstrate loss of habitat: Explain that a new housing development has been constructed in your bees’ habitat and remove half of the flowers from the game. Once again give your bees 30 seconds to collect as much pollen as they can. Add your new count to your chart.

To demonstrate bee health problems: Inform your bees that your hive has been infected with tiny varroa mites that attack the bees and weaken them. Ask half of your bees to sit out the next round. Give the remaining bees 30 seconds to collect pollen, but ask that they walk instead of run. After 30 seconds, record the amount of pollen collected.

To demonstrate misuse of pesticides: Tell your bees that a local homeowner treated their flowerbeds with a pesticide that killed half of your colony. Ask half of the group to sit down and then give the remaining bees 30 seconds to collect pollen. Add your results to the chart.

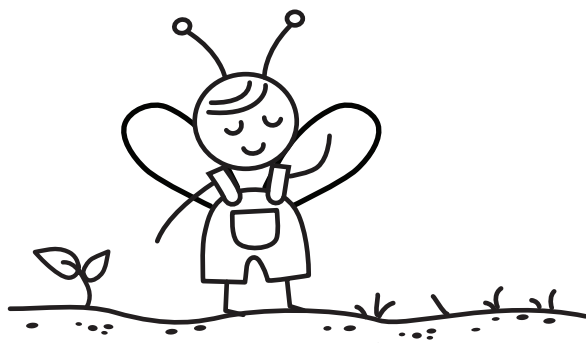
6. Compare the results of each round of the “Be the Bee” Game. Talk about each of the scenarios and discuss how they impacted the bees and the amount of pollen they were able to collect. Ask, How might having fewer pollinators affect our environment and food supply? How important is it for us to have a full Bee Team working in our environment? What can we do to protect pollinators?

Bring the conversation back to the **TOPIC of TEAMWORK**, inviting kids to share times when they’ve worked as **PART OF A TEAM**. This could include sports, group projects at school, or activities with their friends or siblings. Ask, **HOW DID IT FEEL** to be part of a **TEAM**? What was most fun? What was most challenging?



If kids bring up challenges, invite them to brainstorm ways to improve teamwork skills, such as sharing their feelings with team members and other mindful communication, remembering the shared goals of the team, avoiding blaming others, and getting advice from an adult.

*If you have the time, you can create a more elaborate game set up and can also extend the fun with a DIY bee costume. Additional ideas can be found at: <https://kidsgardening.org/lesson-plans-be-a-bee/>.



EXTENDED ACTIVITY: MAKE POLLINATOR SEED BALLS

Homemade seed balls are a cool way to share and plant pollinator-friendly wildflower seeds. Seed balls are small bundles of seeds, clay, and soil or compost. To emphasize the concept of teamwork, have kids take turns doing each task, or create a few stations — e.g., one for measuring, one for mixing, one for rolling the balls.

To make seed balls, place 5 parts clay (available at craft stores), 1 part compost (or potting soil), and 1 part wildflower seeds in a bowl. Use your hands to blend the mix, adding a little water if needed so the mixture is moist but not dripping wet. Shape the mixture into balls about the size of a golf ball.

If the activity was done as a team, celebrate the rewards of teamwork!

Kids can plant the seed balls while they're still moist, or allow them to air dry. Toss or place the new treasures directly onto bare soil. The clay will break down when it rains (or you apply water) and the seeds will grow. Give dried seed balls as gifts, along with instructions for planting.

Suggested Books:

***Bee & Me* by Alison Jay**

A little girl befriends a bee that takes her on a journey of discovery, revealing an action that every child can take to aid in conservation.

***Blossoms Big Job* by Agriculture in the Classroom**

In this charming storybook, a hard working bee will encourage trust and perseverance while your students learn about pollination and how honey is made. Also available in French.

***Water, Weed and Wait* by Edith Hope Fine and Angela Demos Halpin**

When Miss Marigold challenges the kids at Pepper Lane Elementary to turn an unused patch of schoolyard into a garden, they know they'll need all the help they can get. This book can be used with many themes including teamwork, friendship, hard work and of course gardening!

***Wanda's Roses* by Pat Brisson**

Wanda and her neighbors work together to clean up an empty lot.

***The Thing About Bees* by Shabazz Larkin**

A delightful poem about why bees are so important to us.

***Errol's Garden* by Gillian Hibbs**

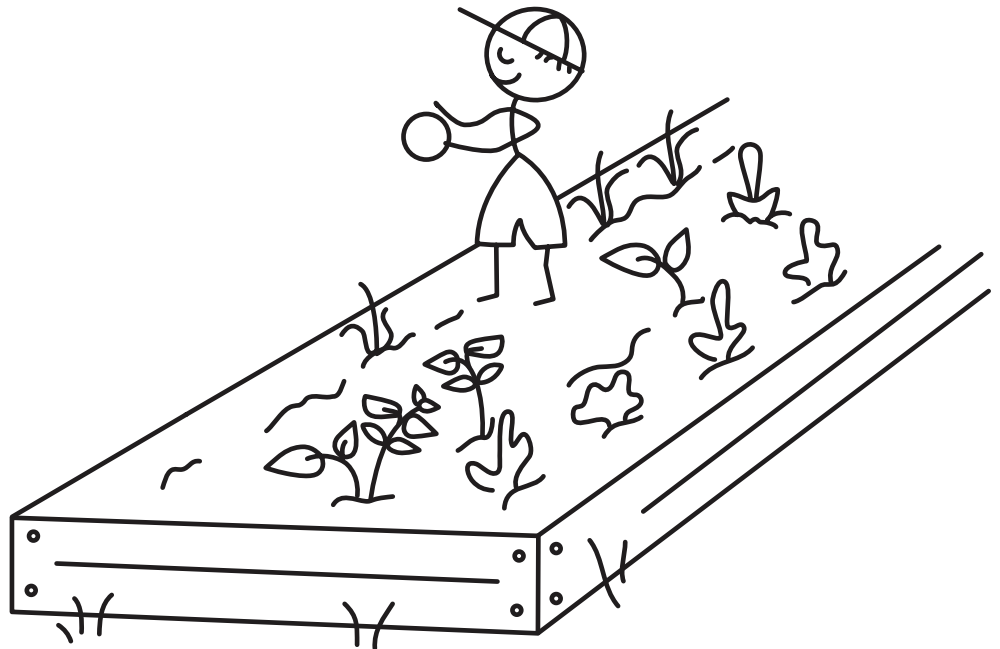
Watch what Errol and his neighbors can accomplish when they work together.

Additional Resources:

Pollinator Partnership EcoRegional Planting Guides:

<https://www.pollinator.org/guides>

These regional guides provide lists of native plants to attract pollinators.



WEEK 3 KINDNESS

Summary

As givers and receivers of kind acts, kids learn just how much kindness matters in our world. The garden offers lots of opportunities for kids to share kindness with others.

Overview

Kids learn the power of kindness through experience. When they are recipients of a kind act, they discover how good it feels to be noticed and valued. When they are deliverers of a kind act, they learn that bringing happiness to others also brings joy and peace to the giver.

The garden offers an abundance of opportunities for kids to express kindness toward others. Here are some ideas for spreading joy through gardening:

- Plant a container with lettuce and give a renewable salad bowl to a neighbor.
- Grow a cut flower garden and deliver small bouquets to a nursing home.
- Adopt a spot in your community to beautify with pollinator plants. Choose native plants that are hardy and attractive to native pollinators.
- At the end of the growing season, collect seeds from your garden to give to family and friends.
- Add a bench to your garden or green space and invite others to stop and enjoy nature.
- Make your garden bird-friendly with trees and shrubs that provide berries and places to make their homes.
- Grow an herb garden and then share fresh herbs with neighbors along with your favorite recipes.

The ideas for small gifts of kindness are endless, and making your slice of the world a better place is something your whole community can enjoy.



HOMEMADE BIRD FEEDERS

Below are some fun bird feeders to make for your garden and to share with others. Offering bird food is not only a kind act for your feathered friends, but also brings joy to your bird-watching human friends.

Estimated Time to Complete

30 minutes

CRANBERRY MILLET SPRAY GARLANDS

Strings of cranberries and millet sprays feed many different wild birds, from cedar waxwings to cardinals, and they add festive colour to landscape trees and shrubs. They can even be twined around a bird feeder post—just watch out for those squirrels!

Materials:

- One 12 oz bag cranberries
- 10 millet sprays (available at pet stores)
- 5-6 feet of heavyweight thread
- A blunt-point sewing needle (plastic or metal)
- Red ribbon (Birds can see and are attracted to red!)

Instructions:

1. Thread the needle with a long thread, knotted at the end, and string the cranberries for as long as you can string them, and then tie the end securely.
2. Use 10" pieces of ribbon to tie the millet sprays to the cranberry strand every 6" or so.
3. Hang your garlands. They look very pretty on trees and birds of all kinds just love them!

SUET CUTOUTS

Many birds require fat for good health in winter and relish suet and fatted seed cakes. These seed cake cutouts are attractive, but they can be a bit messy to prepare, so have some towels ready for clean-up.

Materials:

- Mixing bowl
- Rubber spatula
- Large holiday cookie cutters with open tops
- 20 oz. suet (available at pet stores and in many garden centres)
- 1/2 cup songbird seed
- Wax paper
- Twine
- Large paper clips
- Cookie sheet
- Cranberries and/or sunflower seeds

Instructions:

1. Mix the suet and birdseed in a mixing bowl using a rubber spatula.
2. Line the cookie sheet with wax paper and place the cookie cutters on top.
3. Using the rubber spatula and your fingers, fill the cookie cutters with the soft suet/seed mix to the depth of about a 3/4 of an inch. Use the sunflower seeds and cranberries to decorate the shapes.
4. Lift the cutter away from the suet cutout. Then poke a bent paper clip into the top for a hook. Alternatively, you can use a straw or pencil to make a hanging hole in the suet.
5. Freeze the ornaments until they are hard, and then hang them from tree branches. Store extras in a cool place.

SEED ENCRUSTED PINE CONES

White pine cones are the easiest to find and use for these cheerful, easy-to-make ornaments, but any pine cone will work. Kids love making these ornaments because they are so pretty and easy.

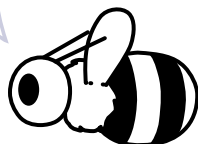
Materials:

- Dried pine cones
- 1 cup peanut butter or sunflower butter
- 1/2 cup songbird seed (plus additional seed for sprinkling)
- Mixing bowl
- Rubber spatula
- Cookie sheet
- Wax paper
- Thin red ribbon

Instructions:

1. Attach a 10" length of ribbon to the top of the pine cone (a hot glue gun works well for this).
2. In the mixing bowl add the peanut butter or sunflower butter and seed, and mix with the rubber spatula until combined.
3. Place the cones on the wax paper-lined cookie sheet, and then use the spatula to liberally cover them with the seed mix.
4. Once the cones are covered, add an additional sprinkling of seed to their surfaces.
5. Freeze the ornaments until firm and ready to hang. Store extras in a cool place.

Ask kids to think about how **GOOD** it feels to **GIVE** and receive **GIFTS** of **KINDNESS**. Invite them to talk about times when they've felt the joy of giving. Remind them that **GIVING ISN'T ALWAYS ABOUT GIVING THINGS**, and it doesn't always cost money. Giving someone the gift of your **TIME, CARE, or EFFORT** can have an even bigger impact than a wrapped present.



EXTENDED ACTIVITY: MAKE NEW PLANTS FROM OLD PLANTS

What could be more exciting than turning one plant into 30 new plants to give to friends and family? One way to make new plants is root cuttings. This propagation technique is not only fun, it's also a way to teach kids about plant growth.

Not all plants will readily root from cuttings, so it's best to start with the easiest ones. Good choices are pothos and philodendrons (common vining houseplants) as well as coleus and geraniums. All root easily in a vase of water.

1. Examine the vine or stem and notice the points where the leaves attach to the stem. These are called nodes, and they are where the new roots will develop. Starting from the tip of the stem or vine, count back 6 to 8 leaves. Use clean scissors to make a cut just below a node. Remove the lower leaves so that at least four leaves remain.
2. Place the cut ends in a glass or vase of water, ensuring that at least two nodes are submerged. Every two or three days, empty the water, wash the glass or vase, and refill it with fresh water.
3. It can take several weeks to a month or more for plants to develop roots. Once they do, you can pot up the rooted cuttings in moist potting mix.

As you and your kids watch and wait for the roots to grow, remember that the time and effort you are putting into this project are leading up to the acts of kindness to come: giving new plants to family and friends. Savor the joy in the entire process of giving!

For further instructions, check out: <https://kidsgardening.org/lesson-plans-asexual-propagation/>

Suggested Books:

Planting the Wild Garden by Kathryn O. Galbraith

In the wild garden, many seeds are planted too, but not by farmers' hands. Different kinds of animals transport seeds, often without knowing it.

If you Plant a Seed by Kadir Nelson

Watch as the animals learn what happens when you are kind and share with others.

Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney

Follow Miss Rumphius as she sets out to make the world a better place.

Flower Garden by Eve Bunting

Read about a how one little girl plants a container garden for a special birthday present.

The Curious Garden by Peter Brown

Look what happens when a boy decides to be kind to some plants he finds.



WEEK 4 FRIENDSHIP

Summary

Our friendships help us understand compassion and bring joy and laughter to our lives. Friends come in all shapes and sizes and can even include leafy green pals!

Overview

Building friendships helps us connect to others in a deeper way. Part of being a friend is learning how to listen and discover the needs of others. Our friendships provide constant opportunities to practice compassion.

Building friendships isn't just for people; plants build helpful relationships, too! For example, scientists are discovering that plant roots are connected to each other and even to certain fungi so they can share water and nutrients.

Another well-known plant friendship is the Three Sisters Garden, a growing technique practiced for centuries by indigenous peoples across North America. When corn, beans, and squash are planted together, they benefit one another. Corn provides support for bean vines. Beans (in association with bacteria living on their roots) provide nitrogen, an important nutrient. The large, prickly squash leaves shade the soil and prevent weed growth, and they also deter animal pests.

Kids have a natural affinity with plants. Blowing dandelion seed heads, hunting for four-leaf clovers, climbing trees — these are just a few examples. This week's project cultivates this affinity for people/plant friendships.



MAKING PLANT PALS

These plant pals are a fun way to encourage kids to practice the skills needed to nurture friendships — and they'll gain new plant friends to brighten their days! Kids will not only create their new pals; they'll also provide them with everything they need to grow. Making extra plant pals to share is a thoughtful way to nurture human friendships, too.

Materials:

- Pair of pantyhose or plastic water bottle
- Potting soil
- Grass seed (annual rye grass, found at garden centres, or wheatgrass seed, often available at natural food stores), 2–3 teaspoons per “pal”
- Miscellaneous craft supplies, such as wiggle eyes, buttons, pompom balls, felt, chenille sticks
- Craft glue or glue gun

Estimated Time to Complete

30 minutes

Instructions:

You can make plant pals with pieces of pantyhose or with repurposed water bottles.

If using pantyhose:

1. Cut a 6–8” long piece of pantyhose (any colour will work). If the piece does not include a toe, then knot one end of the hose and turn it inside out. It will end up looking like a little pantyhose bag.
2. Have kids scoop 2 to 3 teaspoons of grass seed into the closed end, and then fill the rest of the pantyhose with potting mix. Tie the end closed, and then have kids use their hands to gently mold it into the shape of a head.
3. Place the head in a shallow dish with the grass seed side on top. Now it's time to decorate! Have kids choose craft supplies to make eyes, nose, mouth, and arms. Attach them with craft glue or a glue gun. (Caution: Hot glue guns should only be used by older youth and adults.)
4. After glue has dried/cooled, kids can carefully water their new plant pal until the soil is thoroughly moist, and then place it on a dish or other waterproof surface in a warm location. Remind kids to check on it daily to make sure soil stays moist — a good way to practice their nurturing skills. If it seems to dry out quickly, keep a reservoir of water in the dish. In 3 to 5 days their new plant person will begin to grow “hair!”

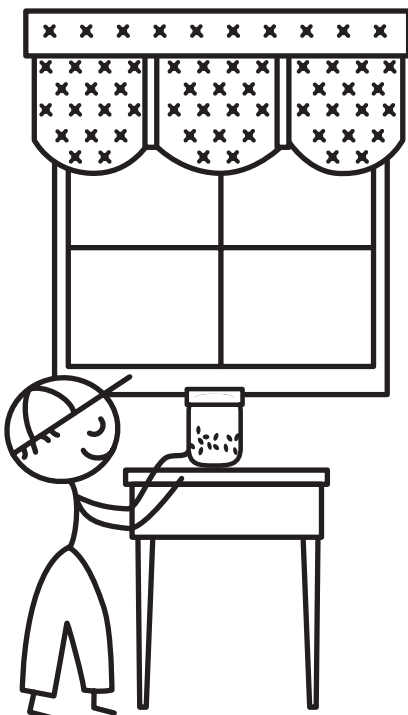
If you are using a plastic water bottle:

1. Cut the top off of the water bottle and carefully punch a few holes in the bottom for draining excess water to create a homemade pot.
2. Have kids fill the pot with moist soil, up to about an inch from the top.
3. It's time to plant! Have kids measure 2 to 3 teaspoons of grass seed and press it into the soil. The grass seed does not need to be completely covered by the soil, but it does need to be in close contact with the soil to stay moist.

Proceed with step 4, above, to decorate the pot and care for the seeds/plants.

Keep the kids' new pals in a bright window and remind them to water as needed. Once the grass “hair” is established in a week or two, kids can give their pal a haircut or just let it grow and see how long it will get!

If you have time and supplies, have kids make more than one to create a whole family of plant pals, or make extras to give away so they can share the fun and bring smiles to their people pals!



EXTENDED ACTIVITY: MAKE A GREEN FRIENDSHIP FORT

Having a special place to hang out with friends is a great addition to a garden or green space. Here are two easy ways to build a Green Friendship Fort.

Plant a Bean Fort:

- Select a location in full sun with moist, well-drained soil.
- Choose a “pole bean” variety; these are vigorous growers that will twine their vines around a support. Avoid “bush bean” varieties because they remain short and shrubby.
- Lash together the ends of six to eight 8’ lengths of bamboo. If you do not have bamboo available, you could use fallen limbs or any other type of long stake. Stand them upright, spreading the ends of the bamboo pieces to create a cone-shaped fort that’s about 5’ in diameter at the base. Push the bamboo pieces into the ground for stability.
- Clear the weeds, grass, and rocks from the soil in a 12” wide path around the bamboo pieces to create the planting area. Loosen the soil to a depth of at least 8”, and add some compost or slow-release fertilizer.
- Plant 2–3 pole bean seeds at the base of each piece of bamboo, leaving a section unplanted as a door.
- Gently water the seeds at planting time. Have kids check the soil moisture every day, and water as needed to keep the soil moist, especially while the plants are young. (Once the plants are older, they will grow deep roots and be able to handle drier conditions.) Kids can begin enjoying their new bean fort immediately after construction, just explain that they need to watch out for their baby plants as they begin emerging from the soil.
- Once the plants have a few sets of leaves, gently place mulch around them to help keep the weeds and grass from growing back. You may also need to cut the grass or pull weeds from inside the fort, at least until the bean plants grow tall enough to shade it.

Plant a Sunflower House:

If you have more time available, a Sunflower House is another fun green friendship fort to plant.

- Select a spot in full sun and moist, well-drained soil. The sunflower house can be any size or shape, but a good place to start is to design one that is a 4’ x 4’ square.
- Create the outline of the house by sprinkling flour on the ground to mark the perimeter where the sunflower “walls” will grow. Clear the weeds, grass, and rocks in a 12” wide path along this perimeter line.
- Loosen the soil to a depth of at least 8”, and add some compost or slow-release fertilizer. This 12” wide path will form the planting bed.
- Have kids plant the sunflower seeds about 1” deep and 2” apart along this cleared area, either in a single row or in multiple rows to create thicker “walls.” Leave one 2–3’ long section unplanted to serve as the doorway.*
- Gently water the seeds at planting time. Have kids check the soil moisture every day, and water as needed to keep the soil moist, especially while the plants are young. (Once the plants are older, they will grow deep roots and be able to handle drier conditions.)
- Depending on how many of the seeds germinated, you may need to thin the plants. When the seedlings are about 6” tall, thin the rows by keeping the strongest-growing seedlings and removing the others so the remaining plants are about 8” apart. You can gently transplant the extras to a different garden area; however, note that sunflowers don’t always survive when transplanted so don’t feel bad if yours don’t.
- Once the plants are about a foot tall, gently mulch around them with shredded bark mulch or compost to prevent encroaching weeds and grass from competing with the sunflowers. Depending on the variety of sunflower you planted, plants will begin to produce flowers in 7 to 12 weeks.

*You may need to weed or mow the area inside the Sunflower House, so leave an opening (unplanted area) wide enough for you to access it.

Time to play! Let your kids decorate and furnish their fort by adding a stone doorstep or maybe chairs and a small table for visiting with friends. As the plants grow, kids will have an increasingly private spot to hang out together, telling stories, watching clouds, reading books, or playing games.

Suggested Books:

***The Forever Garden* by Laurel Snyder**

When Honey learns that she is moving away, she worries about the fate of her beloved garden. Luckily, her friend Laurel is there to help. Honey finds out that one of the best things about having a garden is growing friendships.

***Sunflower House* by Eve Bunting**

Discover how to grow a sunflower house.

***The Ugly Vegetables* by Grace Lin**

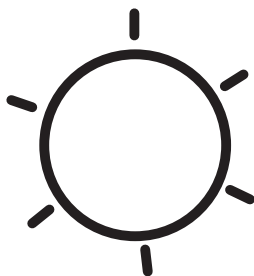
Read about how one little girl’s garden helped bring a neighborhood together.

***Lola Plants a Garden* by Anna McQuinn**

Learn how Lola creates a special space to share with her friends.

***Plantzilla* by Jerdine Nolen**

A creative book about a boy and his best friend Plantzilla.



WEEK 5 GENEROSITY

Summary

Generosity doesn't have to involve giving things; it can be about giving of yourself in other ways, such as offering your time or effort to someone. A gift of your time can be just as meaningful — if not more so! — than a gift of something you purchased.

Overview

As enjoyable as it is to give gifts and unwrap presents, there are many other ways to express generosity besides giving things. For example, offering your undivided attention to someone, or listening when someone needs to talk, or helping with a project — these are all “gifts” that can be especially meaningful to the recipient. Freely giving of our time is a generous act and an important part of learning about compassion.

It can be easy to forget that words, gestures, and acts of kindness can transform someone's day. And they don't cost anything! These simple expressions of generosity don't have to be limited to family and friends — remind kids that they can also be given to acquaintances or even to people they just met! In return, kids get to experience that warm feeling that comes from “making someone's day.”

In the following activity, kids will make gift certificates for gifts of their time and effort for tasks that involve plants, gardens, and landscapes.



GARDEN GIFT CERTIFICATES

Materials:

- Paper
- Pencil, crayon, marker, or pen
- Old seed catalogs, empty seed packets (optional)
- Glue (if using seed catalogs)

Estimated Time to Complete:

30 minutes

Instructions:

1. Invite kids to brainstorm what they have to give that doesn't involve money or a physical gift. If they need some prompting, ask them to recall a time when they brought a smile to someone's face with something they did or said. Examples could run the gamut, from taking out the trash without being asked, to words of encouragement to someone struggling with a project, to a sincere and friendly "thank you" to a store clerk or crossing guard.
2. Now that you've got them thinking along these lines, introduce the idea of giving gift certificates. If they need explanation, let them know that gift certificates are pieces of paper that can be traded in for something. Sometimes they're used for things that cost money, like a movie or dinner at a restaurant. Explain that their gift certificates will be for things that don't cost money; instead, they'll be gifts of their time and effort.
3. Steer the conversation to the different ways kids might give of their time, guiding them toward ideas for tasks that involve plants, gardens, and landscapes. Invite them to "put themselves in someone else's shoes," and imagine what that person might need and/or appreciate.

Examples include:

- Weeding the front walkway
- Helping plant the vegetable garden
- Decorating the sidewalk with chalk drawings of flowers
- Helping rake leaves
- Helping organize gardening supplies
- Making labels for vegetable garden plants

Now it's time to make the gift certificates. You can use the template below or start with a blank sheet of paper.

Prefill the "for" field of four of the certificates with:

- Helping rake leaves
- One hour of weeding
- Taking care of plants while you're on vacation
- Helping plant your vegetable garden

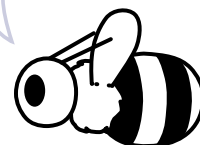
Leave the "for" field in two of the gift certificates blank for kids to fill in.

4. Invite kids to decide what they want to give. They can choose things from the pre-filled templates or come up with their own. Have them fill out the "From" and "For" fields of the certificate, and the "To" field if they know who they plan to give it to.

Kids can choose to create gift certificates for different people. Or they can make a "coupon book" by stapling together several gift certificates to the same person.

5. Now it's time to decorate their gift certificates. They can draw pictures, or cut photos out of a seed catalog and make a collage by attaching them with glue. Allow the completed gift certificates to dry, if needed.

Finally, bring the conversation back to the IDEA of GENEROSITY. Ask if their ideas about gifts have changed. Encourage them to IMAGINE the SMILES they'll see when someone gets one of their gift certificates, and ask them how that reaction WILL FEEL TO THEM. This will reinforce the message that GIVING FEELS GOOD, to the BOTH the RECIPIENT and the GIVER!



GIFT CERTIFICATE

TO: _____

FROM: _____

FOR: _____

EXTENDED ACTIVITY: MAKE A CONTAINER GARDEN

No ground to garden in? No problem! Even if you have little space, poor soil, or are surrounded by cement and blacktop, you can still have a thriving garden — in containers. Containers allow kids to have their very own gardens to plant and tend, too. Children love choosing colourful pots and exploring all their planting options.

To add to the fun, ask kids if they can think of someone who might enjoy receiving the gift of a container garden. Perhaps it's a busy neighbor who doesn't have time for a big garden but would love some flowers on their stoop. Or a relative that doesn't have space for a vegetable garden but loves fresh salads. A flower-filled pot or a container planted with lettuce would surely be welcomed with a smile.

Although a surprise gift is always nice, in the case of a container garden, it might be helpful to ask the recipient a few questions, such as, Do you have a spot in full sun? Part sun? Shade? Would you prefer flowers or edibles? Do you have any favorites?

Giving a custom container garden isn't only an act of generosity, it's also an act of compassion. Remind kids that showing compassion is a two-step process: identifying the needs of others, and then taking actions to help meet those needs. By consulting with the recipient ahead of time, kids will be able to design and plant a container garden specially suited to the needs of the recipient — the perfect example of an act of compassion!

For complete instructions for starting a container garden with kids check out:

Consider Container Gardens

<https://kidsgardening.org/designing-a-school-garden-consider-container-gardening/>

Container Gardening for Kids

<https://kidsgardening.org/garden-activities-container-gardening-for-kids/>

Suggested Books:

The Giving Tree: A Retelling of a Traditional Metis Story by Leah M. Dorion
<<Another version of the Giving Tree>>

A story richly steeped in Métis culture, focuses on the boyhood reminisces of Moushoom as he describes finding the “great giving tree”. This story emphasizes strength, kindness, tolerance, respect, caring, and most of all, the important connection with Mother Earth

Zora's Zucchini by Katherine Pryor

What to do when your garden is overflowing with zucchini.

A Grand Old Tree by Mary Newell DePalma

Follow the life of a tree and all the things it does for the world.

A Seed is Sleepy by Dianna Hutts Aston

Explore all the important things that seeds do.

The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein

A classic tale of a tree that gives it all.



WEEK 6 GRATITUDE

Summary

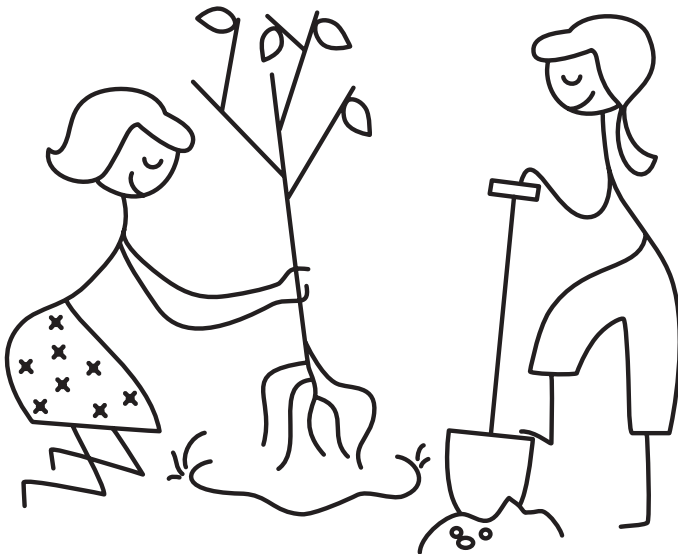
Expressing appreciation and thanks to others for their kindness and generosity is how we close the loop of compassion. Kids can create fun and beautiful gifts from the garden to express their gratitude.

Overview

Taking time to say thank you is an important element in learning about compassion. An expression of gratitude benefits the giver of a kind act by acknowledging that their contribution was valued. It also helps the receiver to more fully appreciate the gift they were given. Kids can make thank you gifts from the garden to help them show their appreciation to special people in their lives and the community.

Begin your kids' exploration into gratitude by making a Thankful Tree. Using brown construction paper, cut out the trunk and branches of a tree. Tape it to a wall. Next, have kids cut out leaf shapes from green or multiple colours of paper. Ask kids to write down the people and things they are thankful for on each leaf. This can be done all at once, or as a daily activity. Add your leaves to the trunk and for a beautiful display of the special people and things in their lives.

The next step is to brainstorm all the ways a person can express gratitude. Appreciation can be as simple as a spoken thank you or as elaborate as a thank-you gift. Below are instructions for making thank you cards using pressed flowers or leaves collected from the garden.



PRESSED FLOWER THANK YOU CARDS

Materials:

- Scissors
- A homemade plant press (materials and instructions below) OR
- An old telephone book and tissue paper
- Weights (such as heavy books or bricks)
- Thinned white glue or Mod Podge (a water-based sealer, glue, and finish)
- Construction paper or other sturdy paper

Estimated Time to Complete:

1 hour to collect and press, 2 weeks or more to dry

Instructions:

A plant press sandwiches plant parts between layers of absorbent material so they will dry quickly. (This better preserves specimens and colour.) Although you can dry flowers in an old telephone book, you may get better results with a simple DIY press.

1. A homemade press consists of several types of materials cut into equal-sized pieces. The pieces can be any size rectangle or square. A press that measures 8" x 8" is a good place to start. Cut the following into your chosen size:
 - 8-10 pieces of corrugated cardboard (the corrugation increases airflow)
 - 16-20 pieces of blotting paper (or sheets of newspaper)
 - 2 plywood boards
2. Once your press materials are ready, it's time to collect the plants. Choose a time when plants are free from dew or rain. Have kids gather plant material, such as foliage, flowers, and ferns. (Be sure to get permission if collecting from anywhere besides your own yard.) Kids can use scissors to snip flowers, leaves, or entire plants, keeping in mind the dimensions of the plant press.

Suggest that they choose small, flat flowers, as they tend to press better than bulky ones. (For thicker flowers, they can press individual petals rather than the flower as a whole.) Collecting flowers at different stages of bloom can also inspire a more interesting display.

To keep collected plants fresh, put them in sealed plastic bags out of the sun. You'll want to get plants in the press as soon as possible. If you need to keep them overnight, a wet paper towel in the bag will keep them from wilting too much.

3. Place materials in the plant press. For your DIY press, place one piece of the plywood on your work surface, and then place a piece of corrugated cardboard on top. Next comes the blotter paper (or several layers of newspaper).

Have children carefully lay each leaf or flower on the blotter paper (or newspaper). They can lay numerous flowers or plants of the same thickness on the same piece of paper, as long as they don't touch.

Gently place a sheet of blotter paper (or several sheets of newspaper) on top of the plants, taking care not to disturb their placement. Next, add a piece of corrugated cardboard. Continue the layers: cardboard, paper, plants, paper, cardboard, etc. to create a stack up to 4" high. Top it off with the second piece of wood.

If using an old phone book, arrange the plant material between pages of the book, ensuring there are at least 10 pages between specimens. (Note that moisture from the plants will be absorbed by the pages and make damage the phone book.)

4. Now it's time to add weight to the stack to create pressure that will help the plants dry and keep them flat. You can use several large books or bricks. Just be sure the pile is stable and won't easily tip. Leave the press in a warm, airy location.
5. After 10 days, it's time to check on the plants. If the plants are still moist, you can swap in dry paper. (However, note that delicate plants, when moist, will likely stick to the piece they're touching.)
6. Once the pressed flowers and leaves are fully dry, kids can use them to decorate cards made from construction paper or other heavy paper. Have them begin by arranging the material to their liking. Then, they can use white glue thinned with a bit of water or Mod Podge to attach the pieces to the paper. Once the glue is dry, you can cover pressed plants with clear contact paper to protect them if desired.
7. Kids now have a supply of special thank you cards to write and send! Remind them that they don't need to wait until they receive a present to express gratitude. Encourage them to think of a recent time when someone was kind to them — this might be a family member, a friend, or a neighbor. Or it could even be favorite clerks at the local shop — imagine surprising them with a note of thanks for the kind service they provide!



EXTENDED ACTIVITY: MAKE SEED PAPER CARDS

Another fun way to craft thank you cards is by making seed paper that can be planted in a garden.

There are several ways to make seed paper. Here are the basic steps:

1. Tear paper into 1" pieces. You can use recycled paper, construction paper in various colours, gift wrap (without a foil or plastic coating), even newspaper.
2. Soak the paper scraps for several hours or overnight. (Soak different colours of paper in separate bowls.)
3. Place the soaked paper in a blender and pulse until it's the consistency of cooked oatmeal.
4. Spread the paper pulp in a thin layer on a screen. (There are various ways to do this. See links below for complete instructions.) Kids can experiment swirling different colours and creating patterns with the pulp.
5. While the paper layer is still wet, sprinkle seeds on the surface and press them in. (Small seeds work best.) As the paper dries, the seeds will adhere to the surface.

Once it's fully dry, the result is "plantable" seed paper! Kids can make thank you notes from sheets of seed paper or cut out shapes and glue them to other paper.

When kids want to show gratitude to someone (or just bring them a smile!) they can write them a thank you note on their special paper. Be sure they include details about their homemade paper, including the types of seeds it contains, and instructions that recipients can plant the paper by laying it flat in the garden, covering it with a thin layer of soil, and keeping it moist.

For additional instructions check out:

Homemade Botanical Paper:

<https://kidsgardening.org/garden-activities-homemade-botanical-paper/>

Homemade Paper Valentines:

<https://kidsgardening.org/garden-activities-homemade-paper-valentine-hearts/>

Suggested Books:

Flowers by Gail Gibbons

Introduces the basics and life cycle of flowers.

Nobody Hugs a Cactus by Carter Goodrich

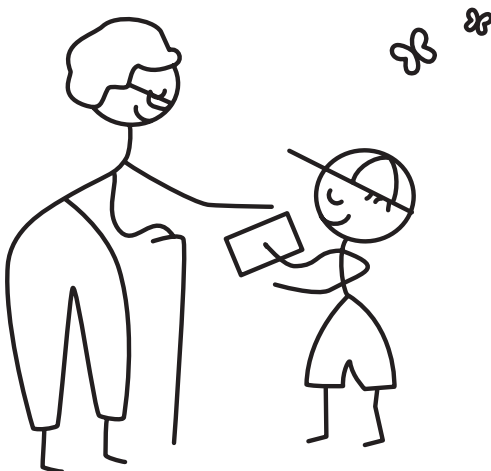
Watch what happens when Cactus Hank decides to say thank you.

The Great Kapok Tree by Lynne Cherry

Discover how all life is interconnected in an ecosystem as the animals in a rainforest tell the reader why they are thankful for the Kapok tree.

Two Old Potatoes and Me by John Coy

A child learns why we should be thankful for two old potatoes



Thank you



+



+

