

My Tiny Sprout & Herb Garden Adventure

Lesson Focus: This hands-on lesson introduces the basics of germination and plant life through the fun of growing fast sprouts and fragrant herbs. It emphasizes observation, sensory exploration, and creative expression.

Ideal Age: 4-6 years old

Materials Needed:

- **For Sprout Jar:**
 - 1 clean, clear glass jar (like a mason or pickle jar)
 - 2 tablespoons of easy-to-sprout seeds (mung beans or lentils work great)
 - A piece of cheesecloth, coffee filter, or a paper towel
 - A rubber band or jar ring
 - Water
 - **For Egg Carton Herb Garden:**
 - 1 cardboard egg carton (bottom half)
 - Potting soil
 - Easy-to-grow herb seeds (mint, basil, or cilantro are excellent choices)
 - A tray or plate to place under the egg carton
 - A spray bottle with water
 - **For Activities:**
 - A few sprigs of fresh, store-bought herbs for smelling (e.g., mint, rosemary, basil)
 - 3-4 craft sticks (popsicle sticks)
 - Markers or crayons
 - A small bowl with water for the "potion" activity
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Learning Objectives

- The student will successfully prepare a sprout jar and plant herb seeds with assistance.
 - The student will observe and describe daily changes in their sprouts.
 - The student will use their sense of smell and touch to identify and describe at least two different herbs.
 - The student will be able to state two things plants need to grow (e.g., water, sun).
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Lesson Steps

Part 1: The Hook - A Seed's Secret (5 minutes)

1. **Start with a question:** Sit with your student and show them a few of the dry seeds. Ask, "What do you think is inside this tiny, hard seed? Do you think there's a secret plant hiding in there? Today, we are going to be 'Plant Detectives' and help these secret plants wake up!"
 2. **Introduce the plan:** Explain that you will do two science experiments: one for a "fast" plant and one for a "slow" plant.
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Part 2: Activity - The Speedy Sprout Jar (10 minutes)

This activity provides quick results, which is great for keeping young learners engaged.

1. **Wash the Seeds:** Place the mung beans or lentils in the jar. Add water, swirl it around, and carefully drain the water using the cheesecloth as a strainer. This "gives the seeds a bath."
2. **Soak the Seeds:** Refill the jar with fresh water until the seeds are covered by about an inch. Let them soak for the next few hours (or follow package directions). This step can be prepped before the main lesson starts. After soaking, drain the water completely.
3. **Set Up the Jar:** Cover the top of the jar with the cheesecloth/paper towel and secure it with the rubber band. This lets air in but keeps the seeds from falling out.
4. **Find a Home:** Turn the jar on its side and place it in a spot that gets indirect light, not direct sun. Tell your student, "Now the seeds are resting. Our job is to give them a drink of water twice a day!" (To "water" them, just rinse and drain them in the morning and evening).

Part 3: Activity - The Egg Carton Herb Garden (15 minutes)

This activity teaches the basics of planting in soil and requires a little more patience.

1. **Prepare the "Pots":** Place the egg carton on a tray. Let your student scoop potting soil into each cup of the egg carton. This is a wonderful sensory activity!
2. **Make a Hole:** Show your student how to gently poke a small hole in the center of the soil in each cup with their finger. "We're making a cozy bed for the seed."
3. **Plant the Seeds:** Let your student drop 2-3 herb seeds into each hole. It's okay if they spill a few! Cover the seeds gently with a little more soil.
4. **Create Labels:** Time for art! Help your student draw a little picture of a leaf or write the first letter of the herb's name (e.g., 'B' for Basil) on the craft sticks. Stick the markers in the correct egg cups.
5. **Give it a Drink:** Using the spray bottle, let your student gently spray the soil until it's damp. Explain that seeds like a gentle "rain shower," not a big flood. Place the herb garden in a sunny window.

Part 4: Creative Exploration - Herb Detective & Magic Potions (10 minutes)

This part focuses on sensory input and creative, unstructured play.

1. **Become an Herb Detective:** Present the fresh, store-bought herbs. Have your student close their eyes. Hold one herb under their nose and ask, "What does this smell like? Sweet? Peppery? Like spaghetti sauce?" Rub a leaf between your fingers to release more scent and let them feel the texture. Repeat with the other herbs.
2. **Make a Magic Potion:** Give your student the small bowl of water. Let them tear up leaves from the fresh herbs (mint and basil are great for this) and drop them into the water. They can stir their "potion" with a craft stick and describe the wonderful smell it creates. This is a fantastic and memorable way to interact with the plants.

Conclusion and Assessment (5 minutes)

1. **Review and Discuss:** As you clean up, ask simple questions to check for understanding.
 - "What two things do our new seed-babies need to grow big and strong?" (Water and sun/light).
 - "Which project do you think will grow first, the sprout jar or the herb garden?" (The sprouts).
 - "Show me which herb smelled sweet like gum." (Mint).
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2. **Ongoing Observation:** The assessment is ongoing. For the next few days, make it a daily routine to check on the plants together. Encourage your student to be the "Chief Plant Inspector." They can report if the soil is dry or if they see the first "tiny white tails" (roots) in the sprout jar. Celebrate every small change!
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Differentiation and Extension

- **For Simpler Steps:** Pre-fill the egg carton with soil. Focus on just one type of planting (e.g., only the sprout jar) to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- **For an Extra Challenge:** Create a simple observation journal. Each day, the student can draw a picture of what their sprout jar or herb garden looks like. This tracks progress and practices fine motor and observation skills.