

A Month of Seasons: A Sensory Exploration for Toddlers

Core Materials Needed for the Month:

- A large, shallow bin for sensory activities (e.g., an under-bed storage box)
 - Art supplies: Washable paint (green, yellow, orange, red, blue, white), construction paper, glue sticks, crayons, chalk
 - Play-Doh in various colors
 - Common household items: Cotton balls, flour, salt, blue food coloring, spray bottle, paper plates, toy animals/people
 - Nature items (to be collected weekly): Leaves, flowers, twigs, grass, small rocks, acorns
 - Clothing/fabric scraps for different weather (e.g., a sock for a hat, a flannel square for a blanket)
 - A favorite doll or stuffed animal
 - Suggested books (can be found at a library): "A Book of Seasons" by Alice and Martin Provensen, "The Tiny Seed" by Eric Carle, "When Green Becomes Tomatoes" by Julie Fogliano, "Goodbye Autumn, Hello Winter" by Kenard Pak.
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Learning Objectives

This lesson plan is designed to be flexible and play-based. The primary goals are for the child to:

- Engage with sensory materials related to each of the four seasons.
- Develop fine motor skills through hands-on art and play.
- Be introduced to seasonal vocabulary (e.g., "leaf," "flower," "sun," "snow").
- Observe and interact with seasonal changes in their own environment (through nature walks).

How to Assess Learning

Assessment for a 2-year-old is observational. Look for:

- **Engagement:** Does the child show curiosity and interact with the activities?
- **Participation:** Does the child help collect nature items or manipulate the art materials?
- **Language:** Does the child begin to repeat or use words like "cold," "sun," "rain," or "leaf" in context?
- **Connection:** Does the child point out leaves on the ground or the sun in the sky during non-lesson times?

Remember: The goal is exposure and fun, not mastery. Adjust any activity based on your child's interest and mood that day.

Week 1: Discovering Spring

Focus: Growth, Rain, Flowers, and New Life

Key Activities (Choose 2-3 for the week):

1. **Spring Sensory Bin:** Fill your sensory bin with a base of soil or black beans. Add some artificial flowers, toy bugs or birds, and small plastic pots. Provide a small scoop or shovel for digging and planting.
2. **Rainy Day Painting:** On a piece of paper, use a dropper or a fingertip to make dots with blue washable paint. Give your child a small spray bottle with water and let them spray the "rain" onto the dots, watching the colors run and blend.
3. **Flower Art:** Go on a nature walk to collect a few flowers and big leaves (dandelions and clover work well). Use the flower heads as "paintbrushes" or "stamps" with paint on paper. You can also press petals into a ball of Play-Doh.

Book Suggestion:

"The Tiny Seed" by Eric Carle

Song & Movement:

Sing "The Itsy-Bitsy Spider," focusing on the "down came the rain" part. Act out being a tiny seed scrunched up small, then slowly "growing" tall and stretching your arms out like branches.

Week 2: Soaking Up Summer

Focus: Sun, Warmth, Water, and Picnics

Key Activities (Choose 2-3 for the week):

1. **Ocean Sensory Bin:** Fill your sensory bin with water and add a few drops of blue food coloring. Toss in some toy fish, shells, and small rocks. Provide cups for pouring and splashing. *(Tip: Place a towel underneath for easy cleanup!)*
2. **Paper Plate Sun:** Give your child a paper plate and yellow paint or crayons. Let them cover the plate in yellow. Afterwards, help them glue strips of yellow and orange paper around the edge to be the sun's rays.
3. **"Painting" with Water:** On a warm, sunny day, go outside with a bucket of water and a large paintbrush. "Paint" the sidewalk, fence, or patio with water and watch it evaporate in the sun.

Book Suggestion:

"When Green Becomes Tomatoes" by Julie Fogliano

Song & Movement:

Sing "Mr. Sun, Sun, Mr. Golden Sun." For movement, pretend to swim around the room or lie on a towel and pretend to feel the warm sun.

Week 3: Admiring Autumn

Focus: Falling Leaves, Cool Air, and Harvest

Key Activities (Choose 2-3 for the week):

1. **Autumn Leaf Bin:** Go on a nature walk and collect colorful leaves, twigs, and acorns. Fill your sensory bin with these items. Add some toy squirrels or other woodland animals. This is a great, simple tactile experience.
2. **Leaf Rubbings:** Place a few interesting leaves (vein-side up) on the table and cover them with a piece of paper. Show your child how to rub the side of a crayon over the paper to make the leaf's shape appear. Use autumn colors like red, orange, and brown.
3. **Autumn Spice Play-Doh:** Add a pinch of cinnamon or pumpkin pie spice to homemade or store-bought orange and brown Play-Doh. As your child plays, they will experience the smells of autumn. Use leaves or acorn caps to make imprints in the dough.

Book Suggestion:

"Goodbye Autumn, Hello Winter" by Kenard Pak

Song & Movement:

Sing "Autumn Leaves are Falling Down" (to the tune of "London Bridge is Falling Down"). Act out being a tree and wiggle your "leaf" fingers, then let them gently fall to the ground.

Week 4: Welcoming Winter

Focus: Cold, Snow, and Getting Cozy

Key Activities (Choose 2-3 for the week):

1. **"Snow" Sensory Bin:** Fill your sensory bin with a base of cotton balls. For a different texture, you can use a mix of flour and salt. Add some blue and white pom-poms, toy arctic animals (like polar bears), and scoops.
2. **Paper Snowflakes:** For a 2-year-old, true snowflake cutting is too advanced. Instead, give them a coffee filter and have them put dots of blue crayon or marker on it. Then, spray it with water (like the Spring activity) to watch the colors bleed into a beautiful, unique "snowflake." Or, simply give them white paper and a glue stick and let them stick cotton balls all over it.
3. **Dressing for Winter:** Grab your child's favorite stuffed animal or doll. Using scraps of fabric, old socks for hats, and small blankets, show them how to bundle the toy up to stay warm for winter. Talk about being "cozy" and "cold."

Book Suggestion:

"A Book of Seasons" by Alice and Martin Provensen (focus on the winter pages)

Song & Movement:

Sing "I'm a Little Snowman" (to the tune of "I'm a Little Teapot"). Act out shivering from the cold, and then wrap yourself in a big hug or a blanket to get "cozy and warm."
