

Plays to Explain What Happens in the Garden

*A lesson from the New Jersey Agricultural Society
Learning Through Gardening program*

OVERVIEW: Children love opportunities to get up and move around while learning, especially outside. A great way to reinforce garden concepts is to have the students act them out. Introduce the concept and any new vocabulary. Discuss the concept with students to be sure they understand it. Break down the “characters” involved. Separate students into small groups and ask them to explain the concept by creating dialog for the characters and acting it out. If the theater is outdoors, the students will have plenty of space to move around and be dramatic!



GRADES: PreK-5

Some topics that are easily dramatized:

Plant Life Cycle: Even the youngest students will have fun acting out the life cycle of a plant. They can curl up into a tiny seed, stretch down as roots, and move from a squat to standing tall to illustrate a stem growing. Arms stretch out as leaves, students mimic the shape of flowers and a fruit, and then it's back to the seed. Preschool teachers can lead students in the activity until they are familiar with it, while everyone repeats lines such as:

Seed: I am a tiny seed. Inside me is a baby plant that will start to grow.

Root: I am the root. I grow down into the soil. I suck up water and nutrients from the ground that the plant needs to grow.

Stem: I am the stem. I am the plant's highway. I move water and nutrients up to the leaves and take food back to the roots.

Leaf: I am a leaf. I am the plant's food factory. I use sunlight to make food for the plant.

Flower: I am the flower. I look and smell beautiful so that bees and other insects come and help me make seeds.



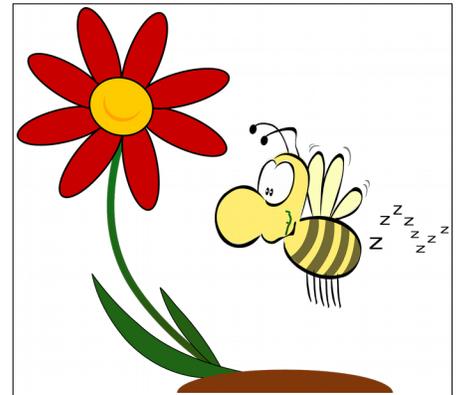
Fruit: I am the fruit. I am a suitcase for seeds. I protect the seeds until they are grown and ready to leave.

Older students can make up their own dialog and plays to illustrate the life cycle of their favorite fruit and vegetable plants.

Photosynthesis: This vital process that is the basis of food for all living things is easy to understand when performed as a play. See the *Learning Through Gardening* lesson *You Are Made of Sunshine, Photosynthesis – How Plants Feed the World* for ideas.

Pollination: Students will be buzzing all over the schoolyard when they dramatize how bees (and other insects) pollinate flowers while they collect their food. See the *Learning Through Gardening* lesson *Bees – The Great Pollinators* for ideas.

Bee Communication: Do your students know that bees dance for each other to show where to find flowers? To perform this concept, your students will be dancing and flying off in all directions. See the *Learning Through Gardening* lesson *Dancing Like Bees* for ideas. Older students can mimic the dances that show bees specific directions. Younger students can dance and just point to the direction for their fellow bees to take.



Insect Life Cycle: From egg, to larva, to pupa, and adult, students can choose a garden insect and act out its life cycles. Discuss which insects are “good” and which are “bad” for the garden and act out the lives of each.

New Jersey Learning Standards

Science: PreK:5.2.1, 5.3.1 K: LS1.C, ESS3.A 1:LS1.A,D 2:LS2.A
3:LS1.B 4:LS1.A 5:LS1.C, LS2.A

Performing Arts: K-2: 1.1.2.1-4 3-5:1.1.5.C.1-2