



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

Kitchen Herb Garden

Purpose:

This activity should be used after participants have learned about transplanting (Session 1). This project will reinforce the lessons learned in Session 1: distinguishing by scent and touch, and using an organizational system. The activity can be extended by using the herbs to create simple food for group or individual enjoyment.

Description:

In this activity, participants will make a small dish garden of herbs that can be grown on the windowsill.

Materials:

- 15 cafeteria-style trays
- 45 flower pots, 4-6" diameter
- 45 plastic saucers, matched to pots for size
- 45 herb plants, 15 each of three varieties
- 8 flats without holes*
- 5 gallons soil-less potting mix
- 2 quarts slow-release fertilizer
- 15 spray bulbs filled with warm water
- 15 large spoons or scoops
- 45 plant labels
- Paper towels
- Permanent markers



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Set-up:

To foster social interaction, set up a work area for pairs of participants. They will share some of the supplies that way.

1. Place one flat between every two participants, with about 10 cups of soil-less mix in it.
2. Add about 3 tablespoons of slow-release fertilizer to the mix in the flat.
3. Fill the water bulbs with warm water
4. Place one tray for each participant. On the tray, place three pots, one watering bulb, several paper towels, spoon or scoop, and three herb starter plants (from 1 – 2" cells)

Introduction

Talk about herbs: what familiar herbs are used in cooking? Can they identify the herbs on their tray? Make sure everyone can.

Procedure

1. Organize materials on the tray: pots and saucers may be stacked to save space. Plants should be organized so that all participants have them in a line from left to right, beginning and ending with the same type of plant.
2. Add warm water to soil-less mix with the spray bulb. Mix with hands until the potting mix is thoroughly moistened but not soaking. The mix should become dark brown and hold together when squeezed.
3. Tear and fold a paper towel and fit it into the bottom of each pot so that the soil will not drain out but the water will.
4. Follow the directions for transplanting, placing one plant in each pot.



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Summary of transplanting directions:

- 1) While they are watering soil, go to each participant with a large-mouthed container of fertilizer. Have each student measure out 1 tablespoon and sprinkle it on to the soil in the flat to mix in with water.
- 2) Direct participants to use the spoon or scoop to lightly load the soil mix into containers to the top (do not pack).
- 3) Use fingers to make a planting hole in the center of the container by gently pressing soil toward the sides.
- 4) Train participants in how to remove plants from the plastic cell or pot without harming it:
 - Holding pot in one hand, squeeze gently all around pot with the other hand to loosen.
 - Place one hand over the top of pot so that the stem of the plant emerges between two fingers.
 - Tip the plant out of the pot, catching it in a hand where the stem goes.
- 5) Gently stroke the roots all around to loosen them.
- 6) Carefully turn the plant right side up while placing the roots into the planting hole.
- 7) Check to be sure that the soil surface around the stem matches the soil surface in the container. Adjust the depth of the plant if necessary.
- 8) Use the spoon, scoop, or fingers to add soil around the plant until it is even and about ½" below the top edge of the container.
- 9) Use the spray bulb to water until water comes through the drainage holes (do this on the tray or with a saucer under the plant).



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5. Write each participant's name and plant name on the labels. Insert the label near the pot edge, making sure participants have identified their plants with the correct label.
6. To facilitate taking the plants home, each can be placed into a plastic grocery bag.
7. Plants should be left in a sunny spot and watered only when the soil is quite dry at the surface.
8. Pinching or snipping herbs encourages thick growth, so use the herbs in salads and recipes.