



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

Simmering Spice Natural Air Freshener

Description:

In this activity, participants will learn about where a variety of spices commonly used in cooking and baking come from. We will discuss both the native habitat of the plant and the part of the plant from which the spice is harvested.

Purpose:

To stimulate interest, cognition, and the sense of smell. To elicit memories and socialization related to memories. To engage in a cooperative activity. To learn to identify size of a measuring cup without sight.

Time needed: 55 minutes

Materials:

1½ cups whole cloves

1½ cups cinnamon chips

3 cups dried orange peel

¾ cup dried lemon peel

½ cup whole allspice

45 bay leaves

45 cinnamon sticks

1 plastic mixing bowl

30–45 reusable muslin tea bags

15 bowls or saucers



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15 plastic spoons

1 set of measuring cups

Procedure:

1. Pass around each of the spices as you open them and talk about the differences in shape, smell, and texture. Try comparing lemon peel vs. orange peel to challenge the ability to discern a subtle difference.
2. Ask a different person to measure each of the spices and pour it into the large mixing bowl. The person measuring should be offered the whole set of measuring cups and allowed to try to find the correct size by comparison.
3. Participants use a spoon to scoop three teaspoons of spice mixture into each bag.
4. Add 1 bay leaf and 1 cinnamon stick to each bag, and then seal the bag.
5. Optional: Place one of the finished bags into a small pan of boiling water to experience the scent. Pan should be removed from heat source once bag is placed in it to avoid boiling dry.

Educational content:

Cloves: The aromatic flower buds of an evergreen tree that is native to Indonesia.

Cinnamon: Cinnamon is made by cutting the stems of the cinnamomum tree. The inner bark is then extracted and the woody parts removed from it. When it dries, it forms strips that curl into rolls, called cinnamon sticks. The sticks can be ground to form cinnamon powder.

Orange and lemon peel: The dehydrated rind of the fruits.



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Allspice: Also called Jamaica pepper or newspice, this is a spice that is the dried unripe fruit of a mid-canopy tree native to the Greater Antilles, southern Mexico, and Central America. When the English first encountered it in the early 1600s, they thought it smelled like a combination of cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves—hence the name “allspice.”

Bay leaves: The leaf from a laurel tree. It is usually soaked or boiled in a dish and then removed before eating. It is edible, but it is very bitter.