



A Garden Recipe

“The Surprise Garden”

Ingredients:

- Book: **The Surprise Garden** by Zoe Hall **ISBN-10:** 0590100769 (This book is also available in a Big Book format from Scholastic ISBN 0439-16423-0)
- Good organic, amended soil
- Mulch
- Seeds (to be transferred to plain envelopes before the lesson)
Peas, beans, spinach, lettuce, broccoli, carrots, radishes, squash, zucchini, watermelon, sunflowers, and/or anything else you'd like to plant.
- Plain envelopes to transfer the seeds into. Any size will be fine.
- Paper plates and pencils
- Popsicle sticks or tongue depressors for identifying rows (color coordinate these with the seed envelopes)
- Gardening tools (These are type/size of garden dependent. And always consider whether or not they are appropriate for the age of your students.)
- Rulers to measure growth and spacing.
- Journals to document (draw or write) the surprise that will come over time
- Digital cameras for continued documentation of how the seeds and children grow ☺

Procedure:

1. Determine the last frost date for your zone. New Hampshire's is typically Memorial Day.
2. About a week before, read The Surprise Garden with your students.
3. Have your students identify the steps involved in creating a “surprise garden”. For example, what comes first, second, third, etc. Making a “to do list” would be helpful.



4. Distribute plain envelopes filled with seeds to students along with a paper plate, a unique color of crayon, and a pencil. Children begin by using their crayon to color the outside edge of their plate (every child should have a different color). Make sure names are on the plates. Children can distribute the seeds on the plate. Have students count the number of seed they have. If you are using journals, have them record the number of seeds along with any other observations about their seeds in their journal. Using a pencil, they can trace their seeds on their plates. When they are done, carefully transfer the seeds back into the envelopes and using the crayon, color a rectangle on the envelope. Children will also use their crayon to color the top of their tongue depressor/popsicle stick. This is how the rows of seeds will be identified. Now that the seeds are safely back in their envelopes, have the children compare "seed plates" with each other. Have them describe their seeds' color, size, shape, quantity, etc.
5. Designate planting areas for the children. Depending on their age and ability, they can make their own area using a ruler and making a 2 foot by 2 foot square or a 1 x 4 foot row. You can also predetermine the spaces by using string and tacking it onto the side of the garden bed in a grid or row fashion.
6. Have students mark their garden plot with their colored stick.
7. Demonstrate to students how to poke the ground with their fingers (usually up to the first knuckle is fine). They can make as many holes as they have seeds, spacing them a fingers length distance from each other.
8. Have students go back and drop their seeds into the holes.
9. Now students need to gently cover over their seeds with the dirt in their square and lightly pat it down.
10. Gently water and keep moist until germination.
11. Have students observe each day. You may choose to have students record their observations through illustrated pictures and/or words.
12. As the sprouts and plants develop, have the students try to guess what their surprise plant will be.
13. As the types of plants become more evident, you will need to thin (for instance, you will only need one or two zucchini plants... so dig up the extras, repot and have students take them home to grow) or stake (beans and peas)
14. Water and weed as needed...everyone should be responsible for the plot.
15. Don't forget to record your observations in writing or by digital camera.

16. Enjoy your harvest. For added fun, weigh your produce as you harvest it for a grand "surprise" total.

Yield: Life-long learners through observation skills, measurement practice, and a connection to where food comes from.

Enrichment: Purchase two copies of the The Surprise Garden in Big Book format to laminate and hang in sequential order outside so the children can reread the story and review the process independently.

A Sample "To Do" List:

1. Make sure we have good, amended soil
2. Loosen the soil with trowels
3. Look at the shapes and sizes of the seeds
4. Determine planting areas.
5. Use their colored stick to mark their space
6. Poke the seeds in the ground one by one
7. Water the seeds.
8. Watch them grow!