

# Get Growing: Learning about Seeds



*Seeds are basic to any gardening project. Preschoolers can find out many things about seeds before planting them. Here are some teacher-tested activities to help children investigate seeds. (See Illinois Early Learning and Development Benchmarks 1.A.ECb, 5.C.ECa, 10.A.ECb, 10.B.ECa, 11.A.ECc, 12.A.ECa, and 12.A.ECb.)*

## Collect a wide variety of seeds to share.

- Bring in seeds from plants the children are likely to see around them. Include seeds from local trees, prairie flowers and grasses, and cultivated plants like corn, squash, and marigolds. (Always use food-grade seeds or seeds taken directly from plants. Commercially packaged seeds may be treated with chemicals that children should not handle. Keep in mind that some children are allergic to nuts, peanuts, or soybeans.)
- Invite children and their families to bring in seeds they find around them. Help the children keep track of where they found the seeds.
- In the fall, take the class on a seed-collecting walk. Give the children large socks to pull over their shoes, then walk through a safe weedy area. Then pull seeds off the socks and add them to the class seed collection.

## Offer children a look inside!

- Provide parts of plants that children can break or cut apart to find seeds. Examples could include pinecones, locust pods, sunflower seed heads, and edible fruits such as apples and melons. (Use safe cutting utensils, and supervise closely—or do the cutting yourself.)
- Cut apart some larger seeds such as pumpkin seeds, beans, and large grains for the children to examine. Offer magnifiers for a closer look, and ask children to describe what they notice through the magnifiers.
- Suggest that children make sketches of the items you have cut open.

## Learn and use seed-related vocabulary.

- Ask a librarian to help you find picture books that illustrate terms such as *pod*, *seed head*, *seed coat*, *cotyledon*, *embryo*, and *kernel*. Help the children use those words to label their sketches.
- Facilitate class discussion about what makes something a seed. “Are peas seeds? How can you tell?”

## Invite children to find out more about seeds.

- Encourage children to find answers to questions about seeds. “Which holds the most seeds—a locust pod, a peach, or a pumpkin?” “How do seeds change after they have been cooked?”
- Let children weigh and measure seeds, or classify seeds according to size, color, shape, texture, etc.
- Invite botanists or gardeners to talk with the children about seeds.
- Keep track of children’s comments and questions as they study the seeds. Make a chart of their questions, predictions, and findings.

## For related Web resources, see “Get Growing: Learning about Seeds” at <https://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/>

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13 Children's Research Center  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
51 Gerty Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7469  
Telephone: 217-333-1386  
Toll-free: 877-275-3227  
E-mail: [iel@illinois.edu](mailto:iel@illinois.edu)  
<http://illinoisearlylearning.org>

Illinois State  
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