

## **Planting edible pots: for children aged 3 years to 5 years**

**The aim of this activity is to give young children the experience of planting, growing and harvesting plants they can eat**

### **Materials**

- One large (15-20cm diameter/15-20cm height) flower pot for each child
- Peat free compost
- Seeds (peas, spring onions and nasturtiums)
- small pack of frozen peas (defrosted)
- small bunch of spring onions (plus a leek, brown onion or some chives, if available)

### **Activity**

- Start with a quiet time, asking children to give thanks for the sun, rain and earth which we depend on to grow plants for food
- Explain that the activity is to create a special edible pot garden: to sow that will grow into plants we can eat.

### **Peas**

- Hand round the frozen peas, so that each child has a few to hold. Talk about the peas. Who knows what they are? Who likes peas? Doesn't like peas? Peas are the seeds of the pea plant. We can eat peas when they are fresh or when they are dried. But did you know you can also eat the leaves and stalks of pea plants? These are called the pea shoots.
- Gather up the frozen peas.
- Each child takes a pot and fills it 3/4 full with compost.
- Peas are the first plant we will sow. Show children the pea seeds. Notice how they are different to the frozen peas.
- Give each child a small handful of pea seeds - no more than 10 or 12. Pop a seed on the soil and then poke it down to cover. Ask the children to call out - *pop on the soil then poke it down.*

### **Spring onions**

- Now pass round the spring onions - inviting children to smell them, talk about eating them/cooking with them. Who likes raw onion? Who likes onion cooked? How do we cook onions?
- Explain about plant families - think of other plants that might be in the same family as spring onions - and hand these round if available (leeks, garlic, red onions, brown onions, shallots, chives).
- Show children the spring onion seeds. Can you say how they are different to the pea seeds?
- Give each child a couple of large pinches of onion seed to sprinkle on the pot. It doesn't matter if they go on top of the peas. Sprinkle a little more compost to cover the seeds.

### **Nasturtiums**

- Show children the nasturtium seeds and give each child 3 or 4 seeds.
- Talk about the seeds - how are they different or the same as the pea and spring onion seeds?
- Nasturtiums have lovely green leaves we can eat in salads. They taste a little bit spicy.
- We can also eat nasturtium flowers - they are red or yellow or orange.
- We sow nasturtium seeds in the same way we sowed the pea seeds - *pop on the soil then poke it down*

### **Looking after your pot of seeds**

- Keep the pot on a sunny windowsill or a place with plenty of natural light
- The pot needs to be kept moist. About two egg cups or a small yoghurt pot full of water is about enough to start. Then, add just enough water so the soil doesn't dry out - about every three or four days, depending on how warm it is.
- Seeds will start to germinate in 5 to 6 days.
- If you have water from rinsing rice or lentils, save this and use it to water your pots. This water helps to keep your plants healthy.

### **Harvesting**

- Once the plants are about 10cm high, children can start to harvest a few leaves from each plant. Make sure the plant always has some leaves - this is how the plant makes food for itself.
- Pea shoots can be cut four or five times and will continue to grow back. Pea plants that are not cut will eventually produce flowers and even a few pods!
- Spring onions can be eaten as little shoots, or can be left to thicken. When they are about 20cm high, they will produce a small bulb and can be cut or pulled up.
- Nasturtium leaves can be picked and eaten in salads - but leave some plants to mature and produce their beautiful flowers, which you can also enjoy eating.

**Enjoy growing plant food for you and your family!**

***Lynne Friedli***