

Young children naturally build knowledge by being curious about the world around them.

As the weather becomes warmer, children observe how their surroundings are changing. Share their sense of wonder about the natural world as you explore plants and animals in your yard and neighbourhood.

How to get the most out of your explorations:

- **Dress for the mess**
Science explorations can be messy.
- **Take your time**
Play for as long as the activity holds your child's interest. Don't rush towards the 'right' answer.
- **Be curious**
Ask "What would happen if..." and then find out. Let your child's questions guide you.

Tiny Creatures

Even in the city, there are plenty of creatures to discover. Check out the wildlife in a garden, a planter, or a park.

What You Need

- Spoon
- Magnifying lens
- Clear cup or container

Hands-on

1. Take a small spoon and dig into the dirt or mud to discover what small creatures live there.
2. Be gentle! If you put the creature into a cup for a few minutes to observe more closely, put it back where you found it.
3. Observe how the creature moves.
4. Take a closer look at the creature with a magnifying lens.

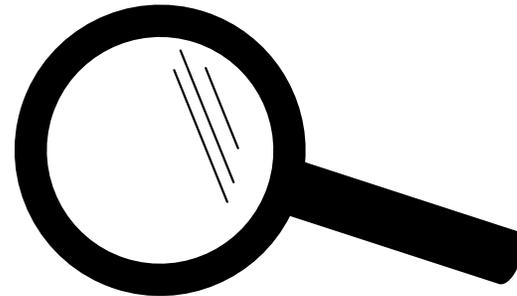
What Next?

- Try moving like the creatures that you see. Can you wiggle like a worm? Scuttle like a beetle? Hop like a bird?
- Make a drawing of your yard or favourite park. Show where you found different creatures.
- Attract some bigger creatures by making a birdfeeder:
<http://goo.gl/pv9Hx>



Questions to Ask

- Does this creature travel on top of the ground or burrow underneath?
- Does it move quickly or slowly?
- How does it move?
- What does it move towards or away from?
- What might it be looking for?
- What new details do you see with the magnifying lens?



Bean Garden

No matter how small a space you have, you can create a tiny garden. Planting a seed in a clear cup lets you see how the roots, stems and leaves develop.

What You Need

- Bean seeds (pinto beans or scarlet runner beans work well)
- Paper towel
- Clear plastic cup
- Clear water

Hands-on

1. Soak bean seeds in water overnight. This softens them and helps them to sprout.
2. Fold a paper towel in half or thirds. Use it to line the sides and the bottom of the cup. Scrunch a second paper towel and use it to fill the middle of the cup, to keep everything in place.
3. Dampen the paper towel with water. Don't soak it!
4. Slide a few bean seeds between the paper towel and the cup.

5. Put the cup in a sunny spot and keep the paper towel damp.
6. Draw or photograph your plant every day to keep track of the changes.

What Next?

- Plant a dish of grass and mow it with scissors! Green Grass Grows from Size Matters at <http://goo.gl/zRFAw>
- Turn sprouting seeds into the hair of a funny character. Brain Sprouts at <http://goo.gl/Qp4St>



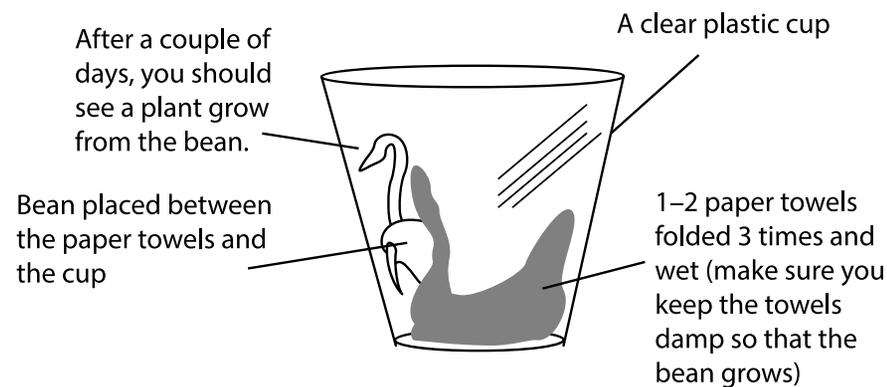
Questions to Ask

How long does it take for the seed to sprout?

What part of the plant appears first?

How much does it grow each day?

Does your plant grow faster in a sunny spot or a shady spot?



Looking for more?

More science activities for young children can be found at <http://scienceworld.ca/preschool.html>

Books

It's Spring! by Linda Glaser
ISBN 978-0761313458

Gregory's Shadow by Don Freeman
ISBN 978-0142301968

Baby Animals by Garth Williams
ISBN 978-0307020505

Shows, games and activities

Sid the Science Kid and other PBS shows
<http://www.pbs.org>

Roly Poly Roundup
<http://pbskids.org/games/nature.html>

Caillou Gardener
<http://pbskids.org/games/science.html>

Peepandthebigwideworld.com has short videos, games and activities for 3–5 year olds. Spring related, see: <http://goo.gl/PPGxX>