



Sunflower Fun

Introduction

In the book ***Jo MacDonald Had a Garden***, author Mary Quattlebaum introduces children to the plants and creatures in a garden and shows how to create gardens that benefit both people and wildlife. In this activity, children learn about the importance of sunflowers to humans. Native Americans used sunflowers for food, oil, ornamentation, and dye. Children will create their own large sunflowers, sample sunflower seeds, and make a treat for birds.

Materials Needed

- ◆ Construction paper (green, yellow, brown)
- ◆ Strong white paper
- ◆ Scissors
- ◆ Sunflower seeds in shells
- ◆ Crayons or markers

Key Concepts

- ◆ Plants are the base of an ecosystem.
- ◆ All animals depend on plants.
- ◆ Humans depend on environments.
- ◆ All organisms have different needs.

For standards correlation please see our website.

Procedure

1. Show how sunflowers were used by Native Americans by sharing the link <http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/food/sunflowers.htm>. Seeds were eaten, ground into meal and made into flat bread, and pressed to make oil.
2. Purchase sunflowers from a florist or nursery and guide the children to observe them carefully (what is the color and shape?), smell them, and touch them. Have them identify the six parts of plant (roots, stem, leaves, flowers, fruit, and seeds). What we call the sunflower seed is actually the fruit of the sunflower!
3. Distribute sunflower seeds in shells and let children open and taste them, first ensuring there are no food allergies.
4. Pass out construction paper and ask children to cut out green leaves and stem, yellow petals, and brown center and glue these onto poster paper.
5. Share more sunflower seeds in shells and ask children to glue them into the brown center of their paper sunflower.
6. Ask children to draw some of the creatures from Jo's garden on the paper with their sunflower.
7. Tape these flowers onto classroom walls to create an indoor garden.

Nature Connections

- ◆ Read aloud the description of sunflowers in the back of ***Jo MacDonald Had a Garden***. Sunflowers can provide food for birds, nectar for bees and butterflies, and an egg-laying place for certain insects. Ask children to look at each picture to discover whether an animal is using it in one of those three ways.
- ◆ Scatter sunflower seeds in shells outdoors. What birds and animals eat them?

Additional Resources

Sunflower Facts

http://sunflowerfestival.tripod.com/sunflower_facts.htm

