

Experiential Activities Grades 3-5



Egg Carton Seed Starters

During April, celebrate National Gardening Month by growing seedlings in an egg carton! Remind children that they can grow their own food, planting the seedlings in the ground after they get bigger.

Materials:

- Styrofoam Egg Carton (Styrofoam helps keep the seedlings moist!)
- Potting Soil (seed-starting mix is ideal!)
- Seeds (any kind work, but think about what you really want to grow so you can transplant!)
- Spray Bottle
- Scissors
- Garden Trowel (or plastic cup)



Instructions:

1. Cut egg carton in half as shown in the picture above.
2. Add soil to individual egg cups in carton.
3. Gently poke a hole in the center of each cup with your finger. Place two seeds in each hole. Cover lightly with soil (read the seed packaging to see how deep the seed should be planted).
4. Spray the soil with water till it is moist, but not soaking wet.
5. Place egg cartons on a tray. Keep them in a warm, light filled location until they begin to sprout. Make sure to water seeds daily if needed, test the moisture of the soil with your finger. The soil should stay moist.
6. Once the seeds have sprouted into small seedlings, you are ready to transplant them to a permanent location, either in a planter or in the ground (make sure risk of frost is over before leaving the plants outside).
7. Using your trowel or plastic cup, dig a hole in the ground or the soil of the container you are transplanting the seedling into.
8. Gently remove the seedling from the egg carton cup and place the seedling and all of the soil from the egg carton cup into the hole you made (unless using a paper egg carton, you can plant it directly in the soil, it will decompose).
9. Check your seedlings every day for moisture level, and water them as needed to help them grow! Fertilize them to give them a boost about 2 weeks after they are transplanted.

Tips:

- Start with an easy to grow plant. Consider favorites are cucumbers and radishes.
- Before planting your seedlings, it's a good idea to take your tray outside and acclimate them to being outdoors. You can start by taking them outside in the shade for a day or two before transferring them.
- Birds love to eat seedlings! If you are planting several seedlings in a garden space you may want to lay a protective material/netting over them as they begin to grow. A white sheet or plastic drop cloth will do the trick. Hold it in place with bricks. The cover can be removed once the plants are about 8" high.

Adapted from: <http://www.pbs.org/parents/crafts-for-kids/egg-carton-seed-starts/>



Herb Gardens & Painted Pots

Celebrate *National Gardening Month* with this colorful, fun, edible planting experience! Planting herbs is an easy way to start gardening, and is super-easy, so a great way to get kids involved in gardening! In this project, it also is fun and creative to decorate their own pots for the plants. After the herbs sprout, encourage the children to experience their senses of smell and taste with these aromatic and edible plants. You can even make these as a fundraiser if you want!

Materials:

- Terra cotta pots (4-5 inches across)
- Craft paint
- Paper plates
- Paintbrushes
- Paper towels or newspaper
- Cup of water
- Herbs (seeds or small plants/seedlings; choose varieties that you will use!)
- Light-weight potting soil
- Craft sticks
- Markers (preferably a permanent marker)



Instructions:

1. Place your pots on a paper towel or newspaper to protect the tabletop. Pour your paints onto a plate in sections, by color. Add some water to your cup and set it next to your painting area for washing your paintbrushes between colors.
2. Paint your pots, washing out your paintbrush each time you use a new color. Decorate your pots however you'd like. Let the pots dry completely before the next step (you may need to paint the pots a few days before planting your herbs or seeds!).
3. If you're starting your herbs from seeds, fill your pot with soil, then plant your seeds according to the package instructions (put at least two seeds in each hole, in case one does not germinate/grow). If you're using a seedling/small plant, partially fill the pot with soil, transfer the seedling into the new pot (with its original soil!), and then fill the rest of the pot with additional potting soil. Brush off any extra soil and water it well.
4. Write the name of your herb onto a craft stick with a marker and stick it into the soil with the name easily readable. If the kids are old enough, let them write the words. This will help them learn the name of each herb.
5. Encourage the kids to compare the leaves, textures and smells of the different types of herbs. Show them how to use and enjoy their newly planted herbs by making a homemade tomato basil pizza, some spaghetti with parsley, or an infused water by adding a little mint (muddle/mash the leaves before adding to drink) to a glass of water.

Adapted from: <http://www.pbs.org/parents/crafts-for-kids/herbs-in-painted-pots/>



Herb Tasting Event!!

What can be more fun during *National Gardening Month* than trying new herbs?! During April, try to do at least one of the activities below. Also, ask your parents to read their April CHG Newsletter that describes herb tasting activities!

Share your Herb Tasting Even on Commit to Health Social Media – contact Allison for more information!

Herbal Tea Tasting!

One great way to try out different herbs is to make tea with them! Generally, when using fresh herbs for tea, use one sprig (or 1 tablespoon) per person (per cup), and muddle the herb a bit before putting it in the cup of hot water (tearing or crushing to release the herbal oils). Don't expect your herbal tea to get dark in color; instead, test for readiness by tasting your tea!



Read more at Gardening Know How: Plants For Tea Gardens: How To Brew The Best Plants For Tea <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/herbs/hgen/herbal-tea-plants.htm>

Herb-infused Oil Tasting!

Try different herbs in infused oils! It is simple to add fresh herbs to olive oil – all ages can do this! Try adding rosemary, thyme, basil, oregano, lemongrass, or other herbs to a jar with some oil it in, seal it, and then wait a couple of days before hosting your herb-infused oil tasting to allow better infusion of the herb. Use plain whole wheat bread or plain crackers during the tasting so the herbs in the infused oil pop! As a fundraiser, you may want to consider making small bottles of your favorite (take a vote!) to sell!



Herb-infused Water Tasting!

Try different herbs in infused waters – check out the *February CHG Newsletter* for more information on how to infuse water! Adding a muddled sprig of mint, lemongrass, rosemary, or basil can make your water pop! Bring a variety of herbs to your tasting event so everyone can try a few!



Herbs in Foods & Beverages!

There are so many fun ways to use herbs in foods and beverages we enjoy every day! Check out some of the ideas below!

Fun Ways to COOK WITH HERBS

Salads

sage, lemon balm, violets, mint, anise hyssop, nasturtiums, borage flowers, rosemary

Soups, Stews and Sauces

curry, cumin, rosemary, thyme, oregano, nettles, calendula, alfalfa and dandelion

Ice Cream

lavender, rose petals, lemon balm, mint

Edible Decorations

pansies, violets, borage flowers, nasturtiums, chives and the tiny flowers of rosemary, sage and lavender

Hot Chocolate

ginger, cinnamon and cardamom

Lemonade

lavender, ginger, rose petal

Baking

cinnamon, ginger, cloves, allspice, nutmeg, cardamom, rosemary, sage, oregano, thyme and even lavender

Dips

cilantro, basil, chives, parsley

Smoothies and Popsicles

chamomile, lemon balm, mint, hibiscus and elderberry

Hot Apple Cider

cinnamon, ginger, cloves, allspice and orange peel

Infusions

lemon balm, mint, elderberry, rose, chamomile, lycium berry, nettle, oatstraw, hibiscus, violet, and calendula



Project NGM!!

Project NGM! What is Project NGM? *It is a challenge!* We challenge you to do one of the following five activities to celebrate National Gardening Month! Ask your parents to read their April CHG Newsletter that describes these and more!

Share your Project NGM Challenge on Commit to Health Social Media – contact Allison for more information!

National Garden Month got started about 30 years ago when Former President Ronald Reagan signed a Proclamation on April 18, 1986 designating the first ever National Garden Week to be celebrated the next year from April 12 to 18, 1987. In 2002, the National Garden Association decided to extend the celebration to a whole month! So, let's all celebrate National Garden Month this year with this fun CHALLENGE!

Challenge #1!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give everyone a shovel and let them turn the earth, then mix in some organic matter, to <u>prepare the in-ground garden plot for planting</u>. Check out http://bit.ly/CHGtips for hints on location and soil.
Challenge #2!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Build raised beds</u> – raised beds are fantastic because they allow you to control the quality of the soil, provide better drainage than the ground (especially if you live in areas with lots of clay), and allow for easier access (and they are easier on your back and knees!). Check out this great page on raised beds http://bit.ly/CHGRAisedbeds. Build them as a group at a community location, or get together to cut wood and put together bags of fasteners so people can take them home to assemble!
Challenge #3!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Share seeds and herb perennials</u> – a great way to try out new edibles is to share seeds and perennials with your neighbors, local gardening group, or others who share the love of edible gardening! Check out sites such as this one to find groups that share seeds, http://bit.ly/2rzsdoF. Find out who shares seeds and/or perennials and create an event with them to celebrate local edible gardening!
Challenge #4!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Build Salad Tables</u> – A salad table is a waist-high “raised bed,” build of whatever extra wood and screening you can find, that produces wonderful salad greens throughout many seasons (when covered as necessary). If you want to try your hand at building this efficient, easy-to-use “salad table,” check out this MD Extension resource http://bit.ly/saladtable. Create some salad table soil-less planting mix, seed kits, or even the whole table for your group to take home to use as part of your celebration of <i>National Garden Month!</i>
Challenge #5!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Grow Seedlings</u> – Review some of the other Experiential activities in this packet; grow seedlings in egg cartons, paint pots and grow herbs, etc. – pick one and go for it!

