

GARDENING CAMP

DAY FIVE: PLANT YOUR OWN PLOT



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Plant Your Own Plot

Welcome to Gardening Camp Day Five!

Do you think you have what it takes to be a master gardener? But have no ground to plant a garden? No problem! Today we're going to learn how you can plant your own plot in a recycled container from somewhere around your house or farm!

Instructions:

Step One - Find A Container

- Be creative! You can use anything from an old peanut butter container, to an empty cow lick tub, even an empty laundry soap container! (be sure to wash your container out before beginning)
- If you're using something big like an old cow lick tub, it can be used for almost anything, but it would be best for larger plants that require more space to grow. Squash and watermelon are great examples!
- For a medium sized container, like a 5 gallon bucket, something smaller like a tomato plant may be a better option.
- With small containers, like an old laundry or peanut butter container, you might have luck planting something small that doesn't require a lot of space to grow. Lettuce is a great option for this size!

Step Two - Holes or Gravel?

- You need to decide if you want to punch holes in the bottom of your container or if you'd rather use gravel. Either of these options will help water in your container drain when you water your plant/seed!
- For containers without holes: gravel is a good option to have in the bottom to help drain water without having to make holes. This is a good option for indoor plants. Simply add a thin layer (about 1 inch) of gravel to the bottom of your container.
- For containers with holes: make 5-7 holes in the bottom of your container using a knife or drill. The holes should be about 0.25 to 0.5 inches in diameter. If you are worried about soil getting through the holes, you can place a thin layer of 1-2 coffee filters on the bottom of the container over the holes.
- When the excess water you give your plant can't drain, your plants can drown or mold. Make sure you have holes or gravel to keep this from happening!

Step Three - Decorate Your Container! (optional)

- Decorate the outside of your container if you are feeling creative! It's easier to decorate before you add soil.

Step Four - Potting Soil

- You will want to use a well-draining potting mix that absorbs water but also drains well.

Step Five - Moisten The Soil

- Ensure the soil mix is evenly moist by slowly adding water and mix thoroughly.
- If this is not done beforehand, you may end up with pockets of soil that stay dry and will have more settling of soil over time.

Step Six - Plant Your Seeds

- Planting seeds: Add soil about 1 inch below the rim and follow the instructions listed on the seed packet.
- Planting seedlings: Add soil about 1-2 inches below the rim, and plant your seedling.
- Make sure your soil level is not too low or too high. If it is too high, it will be difficult to water your plants. If the soil is too low, you will not have good air movement around your stems which may result in disease.

Step Seven - Finishing Touches!

- Gently water your new container garden until water begins to drain from the bottom. Place your containers in a spot to match your plants' sunlight needs.



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Dirt in a Cup

Soil is made up of four components: air, water, organic matter and mineral matter.

In the soil, air and water make up 50% of the soil, but the percentages of each can vary. After a rainfall, there is typically less air and more water. In a drought, there is more air and less water. The remaining 50% is organic and mineral matter. Organic matter is made up of decomposing plant and animal matter and microorganisms. The mineral component, made of very tiny pieces of rock, determines the texture of the soil. Today, you are going to create your own representation of the makeup of soil by making dirt in a cup! If you enjoy today's activities and want to learn more about soil, check out this soil fact sheet from Penn State Extension!

<https://extension.psu.edu/some-facts-about-soil-basics>

Materials:

- Chocolate Candies - Bedrock
- Light Cookies - Subsoil
- Crushed Dark Cookies - Topsoil
- Gummy Worms - Decomposers
- Assorted Chocolate Candy - Seeds
- Sprinkles - Microbes

Fun Fact!

Did you know that a single shovel full of soil can contain more living things (organisms) than live in the Amazon Rainforest!

Instructions:

- Fill the bottom of your cup with chocolate candies, this is our "bedrock." In real life, bedrock is the dense, hard rock typically hidden by layers of dirt and sediment hundreds or thousands of feet thick.
- Add a few light, colored cookies broken up subsoil. Subsoil is typically composed of lightly eroded soil, so it is not a fine texture.
- Topsoil is the most important layer of soil, and also the thinnest - only a couple inches deep. This is the rich layer of soil where all the nutrients, minerals and organic matter are, and where you plant seeds. The grass in your yard is planted on topsoil. We'll use dark cookies, finely crushed to represent this.
- Topsoil is home to worms and bugs (decomposers) that break down organic matter in the soil. They are what make the topsoil what it is! Place your gummy worms on the topsoil to represent decomposers.
- Place assorted chocolate candy in the soil to represent seeds!
- Use sprinkles to represent microbes. Microbes are beneficial bacteria in topsoil that helps plants grow.
- Now you have dirt in a cup! Grab a shovel (spoon) and dig in! Show us your dirt in a cup on FlipGrid and share with us what you learned on the Microsoft Form!



Resources:
KidsGardening.Com Consider Container Gardening
National Agriculture in the Classroom What's in Soil?

