

Activities for Spring

Lavender putty

Lavender putty can be a great tool to use to support children's well-being. Find out how to make it with our recipe and activity guide.



Lavender has been closely linked to relaxation and some studies suggest it helps with anxiety and fear.

Exploring play dough, putty and clay are all ways to get the fine motor skills moving and this Lavender putty guide will get senses tingling too!

Learning aims:

- Understanding the world
- Personal, social and emotional development (PSED)
- Motor skills development
- Exploring using the senses
- Using descriptive language.

Resources:

- 1 cup of flour
- 1/2 cup of salt
- 3 tbsp. cream of tartar
- 1 tbsp. oil
- 1/2 cup of boiling water
- 10 to 20 drops of lavender essential oil

- Purple food colouring (or another colour that calms you)
- Biodegradable glitter (optional).

Activity outline:

1. Combine the flour, salt, cream of tartar, oil, boiling water and lavender essential oil in a mixing bowl
2. Stir until mix is a putty-like texture
3. Add the food colouring and stir again
4. The best part! Add glitter to your mixture. If you choose not to add glitter, you may need to add more flour, so the mixture isn't too sticky
5. Wait about 20 minutes until your putty is cool
6. Encourage children to squeeze and squish the putty between their fingers
7. Talk to them about how it feels and smells.

This activity and recipe is included in our Children's Well-being publication.

Learning about vegetables

Vegetables come in all shapes, sizes, textures, smells, tastes and colours - which presents a whole range of exciting learning opportunities for children at your setting.



The learning aims of the following activity ideas include:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development
- Mathematics
- Literacy.

Plan a visit to your local market or allotment

- Take the children to your local market to look at the range of vegetables on offer
- Buy a selection of vegetables to take back to the setting for further exploration and tasting
- Alternatively ask parents if they have an allotment or contact your local allotment society to arrange a visit to your nearest allotments
- Talk to the children about their favourite vegetables.

Vegetable station

- Create a vegetable station (on a table top or tuff tray) and fill the space with a range of vegetables for children to explore
- Add chopping boards and knives so the children can cut up the vegetables and explore them fully
- Look at how vegetables look when they are chopped, grated or mashed.

Vegetable book

- Take photographs of your vegetables and stick the photos on to card to create your own vegetable book
- Use the book to promote discussion about the different vegetables children taste at meals and snack times.

Grow your own vegetables

You do not need a lot of garden space to grow vegetables!

- Vegetables that can be grown successfully in pots and containers include; carrots, potatoes, spring onions, radishes, onions and runner beans
- There is lots of free support for how to grow your own vegetables online, check out the [Royal Horticultural website for more advice](#)
- You can start off by making a plan of what vegetables the children would like to grow, where they can be grown and what is needed to look after them.

Cook vegetable soup

- Finish your week by cooking a tasty vegetable soup
- Encourage the children to choose their favourite vegetables to go in to the soup
- Share your recipe with parents so they can try the soup at home
- For easy soup recipes see the [BBC good food website.](#)

Working with babies

Create a vegetable treasure basket so babies can explore the different vegetables through their senses.

Rainbow vegetable pizza

This activity will support children to make healthy choices and offers them the freedom to create something however they want!



Learning Aims

- Making healthy choices
- Being independent
- Positive sense of self and self-esteem
- Communicating with others
- Taking turns and sharing.

Resources

- Pizza dough or ready-made pizza base
- Mixing bowl
- Flour
- Water
- Rolling pin



- Different shaped cutters

- Chopping boards
- Children's knives
- Baking trays
- Variety of coloured vegetables e.g. cherry tomatoes, peppers, red onion, broccoli, sweetcorn etc.
- Passata, tomato puree or other tomato sauce base
- Grated cheese
- A camera.

Activity Outline

- Encourage children to wash their hands and prepare the cleaned table with ingredients and resources
- Display whole vegetables alongside ready chopped ones so children can see them in their natural form. Get children to help prepare some of the vegetables by washing them and chopping softer vegetables with age appropriate knives
- Ask children if they can name the vegetables. Give the option of trying a vegetable of their choice; ask them to describe what it tastes like



- Encourage children to rewash their hands after eating and before cooking
- If you're making the pizza dough yourself talk through the recipe with children. Encourage them to take turns mixing and notice how the dry ingredients change form as water is added. What can they smell, feel and see?
- Use descriptive language to describe the dough as it changes e.g soft, sticky etc.
- Share the dough between the children and support them to roll out their pizza base; let them choose which shape they would like their base to be
- Help children put their pizza bases on a baking tray and support them to spread the tomato sauce on top
- Allow children to choose vegetables and create their own pizza. Give them time to be creative and give lots of praise for their efforts!
- When they have finished making their pizza, help them sprinkle cheese on the top if they want

- Encourage children to take a photo of their pizza - they could also take a photo once cooked
- Whilst the pizzas are in the oven, encourage children to help tidy up and set the table for eating
- Let the children enjoy eating their colourful rainbow pizzas!

Extension activity

- Make a display
- Record children's likes and dislikes on a chart
- Use visual aids so all children can express themselves
- Make something with fruit e.g. a fruit tart
- Hold a parents session so children and parents can cook together.

Edible gardening project

Encourage your nursery children, and their families, to take part in the healthy outdoor activities that gardening provides, by planning your own edible gardening project.



Learning Aims

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Communication and Language
- Understanding the World
- Maths
- Literacy.

Resources

- Dependent on what you are going to plant
- Visit a local gardening centre with the children to choose the seeds you need for your planting project
- If you don't have a garden space, ask parents to donate garden tubs and containers. Be creative with planters e.g. an old welly boot makes a good pot container for plants
- Trowels
- Watering can.



Edible garden ideas

Herbs

Many herbs such as Chives, Mint, Coriander, Dill, Basil and Parsley can be planted directly into the ground or in containers indoors during the spring. These are particularly good for a nursery activity as they make great sensory herb bags and can be added to various dishes during cookery.

Lettuce

Salad leaves can be grown at almost any time of year, but the spring and summer are great seasons for making salad. They can be ready in just a few weeks depending on the variety, Lettuce is easy and safe for children to make a simple salad with.

Broad beans

Sow: March - May

Harvest: May - September

Great for maths development activities as children love to guess how many beans are going to be inside each pod.

Strawberry plants

Sow: March - April

Harvest: July - August

Strawberries are so sweet and versatile. You can extend this activity by making recipes, adding them to smoothies, fruit salad, cake or enjoying them on their own.



Tomatoes

Sow: March - April

Harvest: August - October

Tomatoes are packed with vitamins and minerals so are super healthy. You can extend this activity by making recipes, they can be added to pizzas, wraps and sauces or enjoyed on their own.

Marigolds

Sow: March - May

Bloom: July - September

Another one great for maths development as each Marigold flower head has lots of petals for counting and the flowers are edible!

Nasturtiums

Sow: March - May

Bloom: July - September

Nasturtiums attract bees and other helpful insects and the petals are edible, an interesting resource for children. To extend this activity why not hold your own garden party by inviting parents and families in to share your celebrations?

Extension activity:

Go out into your community to support gardening projects. Visit your local care home and help tidy up the garden and take some of your home grown plants to share.

Bake home-made bread

Follow our activity guide for a tasty activity with plenty of learning opportunities.

Home-made bread is often healthier, higher in fibre and lower in salt and additives than commercial varieties too!



Learning Aims

- PSE - Following instructions, taking turns, finding out what they are capable of, pride in their own achievements
- PD - Awareness of healthy food; manipulating dough using small muscles
- CL - Listening and attention, speaking, language, gaining new words such as yeast, knead, dough, rise, stir, mix, prod
- M - Weighing and measuring out ingredients; an awareness of time, numbers and shape
- L - Kneading dough encourages children to use the small muscles in their hands. great for early writing skills; following a recipe
- UW - Understanding where our food comes from; awareness of foods in other countries/cultures
- EAD - Learning how to use tools and use them safely; how different materials can change forms.

Resources

- 750g strong bread flour
- 2 tsps salt
- 425ml warm water

- 20g fresh yeast
- 4 tbsps olive oil
- 2 tsps sugar
- Beaten egg for egg wash (optional)
- Large bowl
- Measuring scales
- Wooden spoon
- Extra flour for dusting
- Baking tray.

Activity Outline

This activity is aimed at pre-school aged children but can be adapted for younger children.

- Encourage children to wash and dry their hands
- In a small group support the children to weigh out the flour and salt and mix them together in a bowl
 - Ask the children if they know what the scales are used for – talk about heavier, lighter etc.
- Show the children the fresh yeast. Give them time to look at and smell it. Ask them if they like/dislike the smell, ask them to guess what they think it is before telling them and explaining its purpose
- Ask one of the children to measure the warm water (150ml)
- Give each child some of the yeast and ask them to crumble the yeast into the water
- Talk to the children about what the yeast does and share some pictures from a recipe book or photos of dough/bread rising
 - After about 10 minutes the yeast should be fizzing and bubbling on the surface; encourage the children to look at this and talk about what is happening
- Support the children to measure out the olive oil, sugar and rest of the warm water and ask them to add this to the yeast mixture
- Add the yeast mixture to the dry ingredients in the bowl and give all of the children an opportunity to mix the ingredients together until it is combined and then form a dough
- Lightly flour a clean, dry surface and give each child a portion of dough and show them how to 'knead' it. Support them to do this until the dough becomes 'springy'.
 - Get the children to check the dough by prodding or poking their finger in the dough and watching it spring back
- Explain to the children that the dough needs to 'rise'.
- Put their individual pieces of dough on a tray, cover them with cling film and put them in a warm place rise until it has doubled in size
 - Ask the children to guess what might happen to the dough
- Preheat oven to temperature 200 degrees C or gas mark 6

- Encourage and support the children to wash their hands and tidy up
- When the dough has risen (after about 30 mins) encourage the children to talk about what they see, what has happened to the dough and what they think helped it to rise
- Go through the stages of the bread making with them, pausing at appropriate intervals to allow them to recall what they did
- Brush the dough with egg if preferred and bake in the oven for about 20 minutes
- When ready, explain to the children that the bread needs to cool; talk about safety and how to keep themselves safe
- When the bread is still warm (not hot!), encourage children to smell the dough, talk about how the mixture has changed from beginning to end
- Eat and enjoy!

Extension

- Add chopped fresh herbs such as rosemary or add seeds to the top such as poppy or sesame seeds
- Make or talk about bread from other countries e.g naan bread, chapattis
- To make a quicker recipe you could use a ready made bread mix or use dried yeast
- If you have access to a bread mixer, this can support children's understanding of technology and how things work
- Make a basic flour and water dough (maybe include some herbs) with toddlers and younger children, to encourage sensory and fine motor play.

Special Considerations

Ensure you take note of any children with food allergies or intolerances and find suitable alternatives.

Pancake Day - Pancake recipe

Pancake Day is a fun way to support children's mathematical skills, knowledge and language development as well as being a great excuse to create a tasty treat!

Create the pancakes by asking the children to use their problem solving skills to work out how they should be made and what equipment they need for the job.

Learning Aims



- Develop control when handling jugs, spoons, bowls etc
- Try new foods and textures
- Eat a healthy range of food
- Begin to negotiate and solve problems
- Co-operate with other children
- Make comparisons about quantity
- Match numbers with quantity
- Use language, such as more than and less than.

Resources

- Our children's pancake recipe (download button below) to see ingredients and utensils
- A range of healthy fillings, such as strawberries, blueberries and yogurt or squeezed oranges.

Activity Outline

- Cooking with children provides an ideal opportunity to develop mathematical skills and introduce new language
- Split children in to pairs and give them a copy of our children's pancake recipe (download button below)
- Encourage the children to work together, negotiating who does what and solving problems together
- Encourage the children to find the ingredients and utensils independently
- Read the method with children
 - Ask young children to identify the pictures
 - Ask pre-school children to sound out the initial letters of some words
- Support the children to measure out the ingredients into the bowl
 - Point out the numbers on the scales to help children make connections between numbers and quantity
- Talk to the children about risks in the kitchen and help them manage them safely
 - For example, cooking with a hot frying pan is a job for a grown-up helper
- Enjoy your pancakes!