

DIG ART!

CULTIVATING CREATIVITY
IN THE GARDEN



Grow an Art Garden: Plant a Rainbow

Overview This activity will guide students through the process of designing and planting a rainbow garden.

Objectives Students will:

- be introduced to concepts of color and visual aesthetics
- connect colors of plants —vegetables, fruits, and flowers—with their beneficial nutritional and biological properties
- create a garden plan based on color

Time 1-1.5 hours pre-planning
1 hour + for garden prep and planting

Materials

- seed catalogues
- scissors
- paper
- glue
- non-toxic water-based exterior paints
- large rocks and miscellaneous stones
- smocks and paint brushes
- seeds and seedlings
- *Planting a Rainbow* by Lois Ehlert



Instructions

1. Begin by asking students about the colors of a rainbow. Make a list of them on the board (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet). Discuss vegetables, fruits, and flowers that could be planted in order to have all the colors of a rainbow represented in their garden. Add these to your list next to their corresponding color.
2. Read Lois Ehlert's book *Planting a Rainbow* as a group. Begin a discussion using some of these guiding questions:
 - Why are flowers different colors? What is a pigment?
 - Why is being colorful beneficial to flowers?
 - Why are fruits and vegetables different colors?
 - What nutritional properties do certain colors represent?
 - Why is it healthier to eat a rainbow of colors of fruits and vegetables?

3. Hand out old seed catalogues, paper, scissors, and glue. Ask students to draw a rainbow on their piece of paper and fill each stripe with photos of different vegetables, fruits, and flowers in the corresponding color cut out from the seed catalogues. Note: When planting a food garden, the colors of the rainbow are typically grouped as pink/red, blue/purple, brown or tan/white, yellow/orange, and green.



4. Once everyone has completed their rainbow collages, organize small work-groups, one rainbow color per group. Each group will work together to select the vegetables, fruits, and flowers they would like to plant in their color section of the garden. At this stage of the planning process, be sure to consider when each of the plants will be blooming and which part of the plant (fruit, leaf, or flower) the students have chosen for their representation of color. Coordinating these things appropriately will ensure that there is a wide spectrum of plants in full bloom and in the appropriate color, so as to create a real rainbow effect.
5. Gather the groups together to create a master plan of the rainbow garden to scale.
6. Next, students can collect rocks to use as a border for the garden. Each group can paint their collection of rocks in their groups corresponding color.
7. Gather and organize all the materials needed for planting the garden, such as the seeds and seedlings needed for planting each section of color.
8. Before planting the rainbow garden with the students, have them place the painted rocks as a border for each section. This way, they will know where to plant things and where to expect each color once the garden is beginning to bloom.

Taking it Further

Students can create an informational brochure or garden signage that tells about the nutritional benefits of the colors represented in the garden.