

Plant a pack Fall activity

Activity: Plant 6 pack plant starts of pansies, lettuce, spinach, and other cool season crops.

Goal: To jump-start our winter garden and to give the children the experience of planting these types of plant materials.

Supplies: Trowels and digging forks, gloves as needed, watering equipment, 6 packs of plants

How to Proceed:

Check your class box assignment on the side of the Science Garden shed. You will find the plant starts in the Science Garden. Take a variety of plants starts and return any unused plants to this area. Try to use up any partial 6 –packs first. There should be enough for each student to plant one plant.

How to plant transplants: Have the children make a small hole with their tools or hands so that the transplant soil level will be level with the surface of the soil in the planting area. When the children remove their plants from the 6 pack, make sure they understand that they need to handle the transplants and the associated root area very gently. Show them how they can push the plants out from the bottom rather than yank them out by the stems. Strive to keep the soil and roots intact so the delicate root hairs that take up water won't be damaged. You can sometimes see these root hairs as "fuzzy" parts around the roots. After placing the plants in the holes, firm the soil around the plants and water in gently.

You can fit about 5 spinach or lettuce to about a square foot, but leave more room for larger plants like cabbage and broccoli.

Discussion: You may explain to your students that professional plant growers start seedlings in the small "6 pack" pots and grow these plants in their greenhouses to sell to us. The advantage of using these plants is that you don't have to wait for your seeds to grow up—you can buy "instant" plants! The disadvantage is that these plants cost more than if you bought seeds. Also, some types of plants do not like to be transplanted from the small pots to the garden and do better if they grow in place from a seed.