

Understanding where food comes is increasingly important in this supermarket-orientated age, when few children have direct links with the countryside. Sustainable development is another important aspects of the curriculum. By making innovative containers from discarded objects and planting them with herbs, flowers and vegetables children can combine learning about recycling with seeing how their food grows - transparent planters even allow children to view the roots growing without disturbing the plants.

## CURRICULUM LINKS

### Foundation Stage 1,2,6

### Art & design

KS1 – 1ab, 2abc, 3ab, 4abc, 5abcd

KS2 – 1abc, 2abc, 3ab, 4abc, 5abcd

KS3 – 1abc, 2abc, 3ab, 4abc, 5abcd

### Design & Technology

KS1 – 1abcde, 2abcde, 3ab, 4ab, 5abc

KS2 – 1abcd, 2abcde, 3abc, 4ab, 5abc

KS3 – 1abcde, 2abcde, 3abc, 4abcd, 7b

## HOW TO MAKE See-through Planters

Seeing is believing - and children love to check and see if plants really are growing roots. Normand Park Primary School, London, grew seeds in transparent planters with removable jackets making this is easy to arrange without harming the plants.

First, cut the top from a plastic bottle and punch holes in the bottom. (Normand Park used 5 litre sizes, but smaller ones would also work.)

Then make a black or brown removable waterproof jacket for the bottle (to keep the roots dark), using a double layer of mulch fabric to fit around the bottle.

Ensure that it fits snugly but can be removed and then put back easily without tearing. Stitch on a design made from cut-outs of polythene bags if desired – some compost bags have brightly coloured pictures of plants or flowers which you could use.

Sew or staple on ribbon or Velcro fastening tapes to keep it secure.

Finally, fill the container with potting compost, sow the seeds according to the packet's instructions, place it on a plastic saucer or suitable waterproof drip tray and water it well.

Then put it in a suitable sunny place like a window-sill or on a nature table – and wait for the seeds to germinate.

Having jackets with fastenings enables the children to monitor the progress of the roots without disturbing their plants. Using this method Normand Park successfully grew carrots, garlic, peas and potatoes in their see-through planters.

## HOW TO GROW Vegetables in Recycled Containers

Despite having a tarmac playground, Boyne Hill CE Infant School, Berkshire wanted to grow vegetables. They had already dug up a central section to make room for some trees, as well as creating beds, borders and tubs with shrubs and flowers attractive to butterflies. They decided that each class should have its own area so that the children would be responsible for looking after their own plot.

They also wanted to demonstrate how it is possible to use discarded materials originally intended for another purpose, so they opted to re-use a variety of old and unlikely containers. They used old tyres (available free from a local garage), an old tin bath, a pair of discarded wellington boots, the shell of broken vacuum cleaner, an old kettle, plastic food tubs and a leaky bucket.

Some containers were painted, some decorated with poems and flower designs, and others covered with buttons, beads, nuts and bolts, and metal scraps set in Polyfix tile cement. You could choose any number of interesting containers so long as you can make drainage holes in them, and they are sturdy enough to hold potting compost. You can even use old woven baskets, whether of wire or willow, if you line them with polythene to hold the soil.

Boyne Hill first planted seeds in pots and trays indoors, to give them a good start before planting the young seedlings out in their playground containers. Their crops included beans, beetroot, carrots, courgettes, peas, potatoes, onions, radishes, red lettuce, and rocket.

The children enjoyed tending and watering their plants, and after harvesting their vegetables they used them to make fresh vegetable soup and lettuce, rocket and radish salad sandwiches.

## HOW TO ADAPT old tyres as plant containers

Use one tyre for most types of vegetables. Use two stacked on top of each other for plants needing more root room, like potatoes.

Paint the outside of the tyre - Boyne Hill used masonry paint coloured with left-over emulsion. Make a base by placing old pieces of discarded wood inside the tyre, and then line it with polythene. Place it in a situation in the playground which has good light – though not necessarily full sun. As it will be very heavy and awkward to move once full of soil, put it in its final home before you fill it.

Fill the tyre with potting compost or topsoil mixed with a

little organic poultry manure, available in pellets. (You could also ask for some well-rotted manure from a local farm. For schools in towns, city farms allow you to collect the composted manure from their premises free.)

Plant out with young seedlings started off indoors. Water the plants regularly and remove any slugs or other pests.

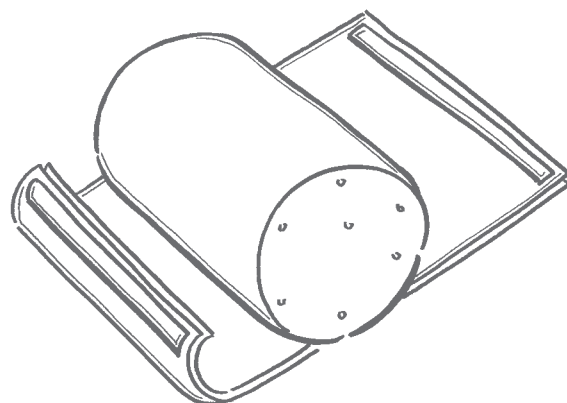
### Old boots can make unusual plant containers



### 1 Cut the top off a plastic bottle



### 2 Make a removable jacket



### 3 Decorate it with cut-outs



### 4 Fix it with velcro strips



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more inspirational ideas: **GARDEN DECORATION FROM JUNK** by Leeann Mackenzie published by Collins & Brown Ltd ISBN 1-85585-761-8 **GARDENING WITHOUT A GARDEN** by Gay Search, published by Dorling Kindersley ISBN 0-7513-0354-2