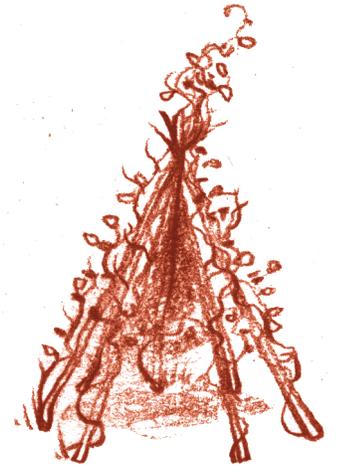


SUMMER *Art & Nature Activity*

BEAN TEE-PEE



MATERIALS

- BEAN SEEDS (A CLIMBING VARIETY- POLE OR RUNNER BEAN WORKS WELL)
- POTS, ONE PER CHILD (IF NOT PLANTING DIRECTLY INTO THE GROUND)
- POTTING MIX (IF NOT PLANTING IN GROUND)
- AT LEAST 5 STICKS, TO ACT AS POLES
- ROPE
- COLOURFUL PIECES OF CLOTH/WOOL/ DECORATIONS (OPTIONAL)
- YARN OR STRING

TIME

Teepee Building and Planting: Approximately an hour and a half.

Ongoing: Approximately half an hour per week (occasional watering, helping train vines up the sticks)

OBJECTIVE

Watching a plant grow from seed can be an exciting experience, and a learning opportunity. This project fosters

an understanding of seed to seed gardening by allowing children to plant their beans as a seed, and, eventually, harvest the dried beans to eat or save for seed to plant another year. Students will be empowered by tending to their plants over a season, and in doing so will observe and engage with the growing cycle. Hands-on building skills are incorporated in this activity with the teepee component, demonstrating that natural materials around us can meet our basic needs.

BACKGROUND

Beans are a relatively simple and fast growing plant. They should grow well as long as they are provided with good sun, shade, soil, and water. Beans give back to the soil by fixing nitrogen. The climbing varieties will attach themselves to anything nearby and grow upwards. Pole beans can be eaten dried to provide protein and fiber in our diet. Beans are one of the “Three Sisters” of the First Nations’ staple crops (beans, squash, corn). Different types of beans produce different coloured beautiful flowers when they bloom, which attract pollinator species. Another great feature of the shade that the weaving of climbing beans can provide. A bean teepee creates a special play space, a quiet oasis, a reading spot, or a secret hiding place. The bean teepee activity promotes long term engagement along the whole life cycle of the bean; from planting, to playing under and within the leaves, and finally enjoying their hearty taste.

STEPS

Collect sticks to be used as poles. One stick per child works well, (having at least 5 to make a stable base). The more poles and beans, the denser your tent canopy will be. Lop off any side branches. Sticks should be roughly similar size, strong enough to last a season, and tall enough to allow for children to fit under. Also consider the inside teepee diameter your sticks will create when they're setup, to ensure the children have space to fit inside.

Have the children lay their sticks together in a pile, and line the bottoms up together. Tie the top securely with a strong rope, going around and through the sticks several times.

Bring the tied collection of sticks to the location you'd like your teepee to live. Choose a place that will receive a lot of sun. Also consider how easy it will be to care for the beans here, and how likely the children are to visit the teepee if it is placed in that spot.

Prop the sticks up. Children can help spread each pole equal distance apart, until it feels secure. (You may need to tighten/adjust the rope at the top). Digging the poles into the ground a little will help to stabilize the structure.

If planting in pots, the children can fill their pots with potting soil. Demonstrate how to plant the bean: placing the seed about 2 inches under the soil, and covering with dirt. Each pot gets placed at the base of each pole. If planting directly into the ground, dig up some soil at the base of each pole and plant the bean there. Water the beans after planting them. Engage the children in the planting process by singing a verse about growing, and include actions. Discuss what basic needs all seeds require (sunlight, water, nutrients), and imagine how tall these seeds will grow up to form the teepee.

Bright yarn can be used as both decoration and a growing lattice for the beans to climb up. Children can help weave their yarn horizontally around the sticks, making sure to leave a door for an entrance way. Pieces of ribbon, cloth, or flags, can be added in for colour. Get as artistic as you like!

For best growth, the beans should be kept well watered. They should germinate in about a week. When the plants are tall

enough to be handled, they can be tied to their poles where they should be able to continue growing up on their own (although they may need occasional guidance). Your beans will be ready to harvest when the pods are firm and smooth. Dried beans for storage and/or planting again next year will be ready when the pod turns dry, brown and crunchy.

To extend this activity, children can help with the harvest, and help prepare a delicious bean dish with the very plants they've planted and enjoyed throughout the season.

POEM

THE LITTLE PLANT

In the heart of a seed,
Buried deep so deep,
A tiny plant
Lay fast asleep.
"Wake," said the sunshine,
"And creep to the light."
"Wake," said the voice
Of the raindrops bright.
The little plant heard
And it rose to see,
What the wonderful,
Outside world might be.

SOURCES

- www.canteach.ca/elementary/songspoems22.html
- www.gardeningknowhow.com/special/children/childrens-bean-teepee.htm
- myfolia.com/plants/35-bean-phaseolus-vulgaris

