

## Introduction and Preparation for the Focus Area – Things that Grow

### Introduction

During the first 18 months of life, children are usually referred to as young infants (birth to 8 months) and mobile infants (8 to 18 months). Children between the ages of 18 and 36 months are usually called toddlers.

In Focus Areas 1, 2, 3, and 4, toddlers were involved in experiences that focused on themselves, their families, their communities, and their favorite things for play and learning. Focus Area #5 is **Things that Grow**.

In this Focus Area, **Things that Grow**, the experiences will primarily support the following Domain of Child Development and Early Learning: **Science and Technology (ST)**. In this Focus Area, children are involved in activities that focus on living things: vegetables, flowers and trees. They are involved in the science component of **STEM** (science, technology, engineering and math).

As in all of the Focus Areas, there are experiences that support all of the Domains with a strong emphasis on the following Domains of Child Development and Early Learning: **Language Development (LD)** and **Emergent Literacy (EL)**.

Toddlers love to be outdoors. Give them a small shovel, a place to dig and the shade of a tree and they will stay outdoors for hours, especially when the weather is warm. Take advantage of toddlers' love for the outdoors as you involve them in experiencing things that grow in their environment.

Each program, family and community will have a different outdoor environment. Become familiar with these environments so that you can involve toddlers in relevant hands-on experiences with things that grow.

Through both planned and spontaneous experiences, caregivers can provide opportunities for toddlers to become aware of and be involved with things that grow in their natural environment.

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### Teacher Notes

- *In this Focus Area, Things that Grow, there are three Topics of Study*
  - *Vegetables*
  - *Flowers*
  - *Trees*
- *Many of the experiences in this Focus Area have an age designation of either Young Toddler (YT) or Older Toddler (OT). However, these two age designations do not specify age in months.*
- *Use your knowledge of individual children to determine which experiences are appropriate for which children in your care.*
- *Consider extending a Topic of Study over several weeks. There is so much toddlers can learn about this topic. Carry over activities from one week to another because toddlers enjoy and learn best through repetition.*

*Arkansas Minimum Licensing Requirements (Rev. 1.1.15) requires the following:*

#### **400 PROGRAM – 401 Program Requirements for all ages**

5.a. The facility shall have an approved curriculum with weekly activity plans appropriate for the developmental needs of each group of children.

To assist your program in meeting this requirement, refer to Developing Weekly Activity Plans for Adventures for toddlers for information on how to develop your plans. In addition, 2 different examples of blank Weekly Activity Plan sheets are included. Feel free to make copies of the plan sheet you select and use it each week.

To help you in planning, there are also 4 samples of completed Weekly Activity Plans that you may use as guides when developing activity plans for your group of children.

**Teacher Note:** *Should you choose to develop your own Weekly Activity Plan sheet, feel free to use the information presented here as a guide.*

### Resources

- Children’s books can be purchased online, from school supply catalogs or local book stores.
- Check with your local library for the availability of children’s books.
- **The Infant /Toddler Library** from Lakeshore Learning (50 photos and activity cards focusing on the following topics: Transportation, Farm Animals, Nature, Pets, Home, Food, Community Helpers, Emotions)
- CDs which can be ordered online or from school supply catalogs:
  - Baby Beluga by Raffi
  - Songs for I Love You Rituals 2 with songs by Dr. Becky Bailey and music by Mar Harman
  - Sea Gulls Music for Rest and Relaxation by Hap Palmer
  - Quiet Time by Raffi
  - Singable Songs for the Very Young – Great with a Peanut Butter Sandwich by Raffi
  - Toddlers Favorite Music – for Little People
  - Toddlers on Parade, KIMBO Educational

### Picture File

- Collect pictures that relate to this Focus Area – **Things that Grow**. Examples of pictures to collect include:
    - vegetable and flower gardens
    - people planting, caring for and harvesting vegetables
    - flowers featured in events such as weddings
    - flowers, vegetables and trees
    - events that include people and trees – child in swing hanging from a tree limb, children climbing tree, picnic under a tree
- Include small (index card size) as well as larger pictures. Consider mounting the small pictures on index cards. Laminate or cover all of the pictures with clear, self-adhesive paper for durability.
- Post some of the pictures on the wall at toddler’s eye level. Observe to see if toddlers look at the pictures and point to and/or name the objects or people in the pictures. Join them and expand on what they say. For example, say to Megan who is looking at a collection of pictures of flowers, “Megan, you’re looking at the pretty flowers in the bride’s bouquet. Tell me about the flowers you saw when you went to your aunt’s wedding.”
  - Put some of the small pictures in a container and place in the library area so that it is accessible to children. Observe a child as he takes the pictures out of the box. Should the child bring a picture to you, involve him in discussing what he sees in the picture. “The man in this picture is planting a garden.”
  - Keep some of the pictures in a basket or tote bag within easy reach. Use the pictures with an individual child or a small group of children. Invite them to name objects and to talk about what is happening in the pictures. Allow children to look at the pictures on their own. Model and talk with them about the proper way to handle the pictures.
  - Determine if funds are available to purchase **The Infant /Toddler Photo Library** from Lakeshore Learning

**Teacher Note:** *Refer to **Curriculum Tips and Techniques** – Picture File, for additional information about how to organize a picture file.*

## **Toddler Environment**

The toddler environment should always provide equipment and materials for language experiences, manipulative exploration, gross motor and block play, sensory exploration, pretend play and outdoor exploration. The following additions to the environment are intended for the entire Focus Area: **Things that Grow**.

### **Language Area**

- Add the following teacher-made books:
  - *We Can Grow Vegetables*
  - *Red Rose, Red Rose, What Do You See?*
  - *Flowers of Many Colors*
  - *I Like Trees*
  - *If I Were a Blue Bird*
- Add container of pictures that have been laminated or covered with clear self-adhesive paper. (See **Picture File**, page 2 for examples of types of pictures to collect.)

### **Manipulative Exploration**

- Vegetable Match Cards
- Sensory Bottles with vegetable seeds, dried beans and dried flowers
- Flower Match Cards
- Leaf Match

### **Gross Motor & Blocks**

- Add small tree branches and evergreen boughs
- Add trucks for hauling branches and boughs

### **Sensory Exploration**

- Add Sensory Bottles with vegetable seeds and dried beans
- Add Sensory Bottles with dried flowers
- Add potting soil in a small tub. Include small plastic rake, shovel, gardening gloves, plastic flower pots and plastic or silk flowers

### **Pretend Play**

- Add an arrangement of silk or plastic flowers in an unbreakable vase.
- Add additional silk or plastic flowers and unbreakable vases.
- Add pine cones and evergreen boughs in a basket.
- Add a gardening prop box. Include a small plastic rake, shovel, gardening gloves, flower and vegetable seed packets, plastic flower pots and plastic or silk flowers.
- Post pictures of flower and vegetable gardens and of trees on the wall in the pretend play area.
- Add gardening magazines or catalogs.

### **Outdoor Exploration**

- Involve children in locating their special tree either on the playground or in a safe area that is nearby. Plan experiences that include the tree.
- Hang wind chimes from the branch of a tree. Locate them so that children can hear them. Observe to see if children look for the source of the sounds made by the chimes. If children do not notice the wind chimes, for example, make a comment such as, "I wonder where that sound is coming from. Let's see if we can find out what is making that sound."
- Go on a sensory walk with the children. Invite them to touch safe items in nature: the bark of a tree, the leaves of a shrub or tree, a pinecone that is on the ground. Use tactile words to describe the items. "Feel how rough the bark of this tree is." "This pine cone is prickly." Encourage them to notice flowers that are blooming.

- Take a basket of toys outdoors and place it under a tree. Encourage children to play with the toys in the shade of the tree.
- Take a gardening prop box outdoors. Include a small rake, shovel, gardening gloves, flower and vegetable seed packets, plastic flower pots and plastic or silk flowers.

**Safety Note:** *It is the responsibility of the child care program and each employee to ensure the safety of toddlers in the program. This includes the materials and equipment provided for children's use. Should you have safety questions, the developers of this curriculum suggest that you consult with your Child Care Licensing Specialist for technical assistance.*

*Curriculum books such as **The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & 2s, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition**, contain safety information. See **Curriculum Tips and Techniques, References and Resources**, for additional resources.*

### **Family Connection and Engagement**

Send home a note to families stating that for the next few weeks the children will be involved in the Focus Area: **Things that Grow**. They will participate in experiences that focus on growing vegetables and flowers and on trees that they see in their environment. How families can be involved in this toddler topic will depend on the situation of each child and his or her family.

Consider some of the following ways to involve the families:

- Invite families to send a photo of their child under a tree in the backyard or in the park, for example.
- Invite families to send photos of their child and family members enjoying an outing such as a picnic that takes place under a tree.
- Invite families to send catalogs and magazines that feature things that grow.
- Suggest that families involve their children in planting and caring for things that grow in the family garden or flower beds.
- Know your families. Invite a family member that you know grows a garden to bring in some harvested vegetables to share with the children.