

HOME GARDEN LESSON 1

Egg Carton Seed Starter



SCIENCE: Questioning, Observing, Identifying, Monitoring, Recording

MATHEMATICS: Measuring, Comparing, Modeling

LANGUAGE ARTS: Writing, Reading, Comprehending

VISUAL ARTS: Drawing, Creating, Designing

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Gardens provide a diverse, hands-on teaching environment. One of the benefits of gardening, whether at home or in a school setting, is the opportunity to foster a child's connection with their natural environment. Gardens also provide an engaging place to teach and practice healthy food choices.

Over the course of the Home Garden Lessons, we will walk students through the process of starting a home garden from planting to harvest. The first activity will guide students to create indoor seed starters using recycled egg cartons.

**This activity should be completed in May or June.
It will take about 2 weeks for sprouts to appear.**

1.2 MAKE A GARDEN JOURNAL

- Label your notebook as your **"Garden Journal"**. Write the word **"Seeds"** at the top of the first page. The following activities will be completed on this page.
- Look at the back of your seed packages. For each type of seed, write down (with help from a parent if needed):
 - How deep the seed needs to be buried in the soil
 - About how many days until you will see a sprout (this will be labeled "days to germination" on the seed package)
 - About how many days until you can harvest your vegetables (this will be labeled "days to maturity" on the seed package)
- Your page might look something like this:

	Tomato	Bean	Pepper
How Deep?	6-12 mm		
Days until sprout	2-10 days		
Days until harvest	50-90 days		

- Open the seed packages and look at the seeds.
 - What do the seeds look like? Do the different types of seeds share any characteristics with each other, such as size, shape or colour? Do they look very different?
 - Make a list of characteristics for each type of seed. Draw a picture of each seed beside their list of characteristics, and then draw a picture of the vegetable that seed will grow into.



1.2 MATERIALS:

- Packages of seeds
Beans, peppers, tomatoes and zucchini are good beginner vegetables. Students could choose 2 or 3 for variety.
- Empty notebook
- Pencil or pen

TIPS AND TOOLS

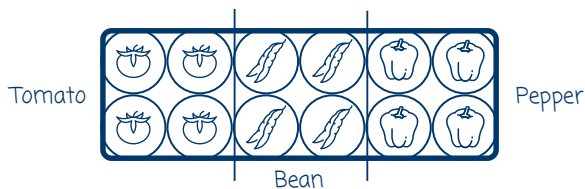
Egg cartons are great seed starters: divided into sections, easy to label, and easy to cut into smaller containers.

Some are biodegradable (paper, not foam or plastic) and can be buried in the soil with the seedling when it comes time to transplant.



1.3 START YOUR SEEDS

- Carefully remove the lid from your egg carton with scissors and poke a small hole in the bottom of each egg cup. This will allow excess water to drain.
- To avoid a mess, place a waterproof base or tray underneath your egg carton.
Optional Step: Mix some coffee grounds or compost with your soil/dirt. This will provide nutrients that will help the seeds grow.
- Fill the egg cups with soil and bury 1-2 seeds per cup; try to have at least 2-4 cups for each type of seed. Check the **"Seeds"** page in your garden journal to see how deep to bury them.
- On the top of the next page, draw a planting diagram. Draw your egg carton and mark where each seed is growing. Your diagram might look like this:



- Water until the soil is moist but not soaking wet. Plants should be watered 1-2 times per day (or just enough to keep the soil moist). Think about a wet sponge that has been wrung out; this is how moist the soil should feel.
- Put a clear plastic covering over the egg carton to keep your seeds warm. Make sure you put the plastic covering back on each time you remove it to water your seeds.
- Keep your egg carton (in the waterproof base) on a sunny windowsill. Try to find a window where your seeds will get at least 6-8 hours of direct sunlight.

1.4 NEXT STEPS

**Let your seeds grow, making sure to keep the soil moist.
In 2-3 weeks, you should start seeing sprouts!**

- Write the word **"Sprouts"** at the top of the next page. The following activities will be completed on this page.
- For each plant, record the first day you see a sprout. Make sure to fully remove the plastic covering once you see the first sprout so your plants have room to grow.
- Measure sprouts with a ruler or measuring tape twice per week, about every 3-4 days, and record the height of your plants as they grow. Your height chart might look something like this:

	Zucchini 1		Pepper 1		Pepper 2	
Sprout Date	May 20					
	Height	Date	Height	Date	Height	Date
	3 mm	May 24				
	8 mm	May 27				

- When your sprouts are about 2 weeks old, they can be transplanted into larger individual pots. If you plan to use recycled containers instead of plant pots (such as ice cream tubs, pop bottles or old toys), be sure to save them in advance!

Transplanting will be covered in Home Garden Lesson 2.

1.3 MATERIALS:

- Scissors
- Egg carton
- Waterproof base or tray
- Packages of seeds
- Potting soil**
- Clear plastic covering
For example, you could use cling wrap or a clear plastic bag.

OPTIONAL MATERIALS:

- Coffee grounds or compost
- Spray bottle for watering

***You may also substitute dirt from outside mixed with a little compost.*



1.4 MATERIALS:

- Garden journal
- Pencil or pen
- Ruler or measuring tape

✓ TIPS AND TOOLS

When your seedlings start to sprout, rotate the egg carton daily so that every sprout gets an even amount of sunlight.

Some seeds will never become sprouts, and that's okay! There are lots of reasons why this can happen, so don't be discouraged if you don't get as many sprouts as you expected.

