

GARDEN WITH US!

at COASTAL MAINE BOTANICAL GARDENS

Looking for fun activities to bring nature home for the whole family? Follow along with Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, and then share your results with us on Instagram and Facebook using **#CMBGatHome!**

PLAN A SPRING GARDEN

Supplies needed:

- Seed catalogs
- Paper and pencil
- Scissors
- Glue or tape

Steps:

1. Use this resource to learn what (and when!) vegetables can be planted in Maine in the spring: extension.umaine.edu/gardening/manual/propagation/plant-from-spring-to-fall/
2. Use seed catalogs to pick the varieties of the vegetables you would like to grow. You can either request a catalog be sent to you from a seed company's website, or use their online catalog to select your plants. Maine has some great seed companies such as: www.johnnyseeds.com; www.fedcoseeds.com; and www.superseeds.com.
3. Use this free online resource to plan out your vegetable garden utilizing square foot gardening: www.gardeners.com/on/demandware.store/Sites-Gardeners-Site/default/KGP-Design
4. Or, if you have paper copies of seed catalogs, cut out the pictures of the fruits and vegetables you would like to grow and create your own spring garden design using glue or tape and a piece of paper. Keep in mind the dimensions of your garden as you lay out your pictures. Each plant needs a specific amount of distance from its neighbor.
For example, plants like broccoli and cauliflower need to be spaced 18-24" apart from one another in a row. Some seed catalogs will give you the spacing requirements of each plant, but if you don't find them there, you can use this chart: www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/vegetables/vgen/plant-spacing-chart.htm

START A "ROOT TOP" GARDEN

Supplies needed:

- Root vegetables such as carrots, beets, onions, radishes, and turnips. (Tip: Your root vegetables must have their tops intact. Bagged radishes that have had their tops cut off will not work).
- Shallow dish such as a peanut butter lid
- Water

Steps:

1. Cut the top off of your root vegetables, leaving one inch of the meat of the root still intact.
2. Place the tops of your root vegetables in your shallow dish and fill with enough water to cover the bottom half of your root top.
3. Place in a sunny window and check daily, replenishing the water if necessary. (Tip: The sunnier the window and more shallow the dish, the more often you will need to add water). Do not let the dish dry up!
4. In about a week, you should see roots sprouting into the water and new leaves growing from the top of your root.
5. The leaves that sprout from your root tops can be eaten—simply cut a few from each root top and add to salads or stir fry. If you would like to keep your root top garden going for a while, it would be a good idea to plant your root tops in soil, covering all the roots that have formed. They can either be planted inside in a container, or outside if nighttime temperatures are above 45 degrees.
6. Don't forget to keep your root tops watered if you plant them in soil!

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CREATE A ROOT VUE BOX

Supplies needed:

- Empty CD case. Regular-sized cases will work better than thin ones.
- Paper towels
- Seeds, like: beans, sesame seeds, poppies, sunflowers, or any other seeds you might have in your cabinet.

Steps:

1. Open the CD case and position vertically with the opening facing up.
2. Fold a paper towel and wet it so that it is damp, but not soaking.
3. Place the paper towel in the case so that it covers the lower half of your CD case.
4. Place 6-8 seeds on top of the damp paper towel, spacing them evenly. (Tip: soaking your seeds for a few hours, or even overnight, before the activity will help them to sprout sooner).
5. Fold another paper towel the same way as the first and dampen it.
6. Lay the second paper towel over the seeds and close the case.
7. Place the CD case upright in a sunny windowsill. The seeds should stay in place, but it's okay if they shift, as long as they remain sandwiched between the two paper towels.
8. Check your "root vue" box daily. Don't allow the paper towels to dry out. When looking dry, carefully run the CD case under water in your sink to remoisten the paper towels. If you want to open the case to check the moisture level, be sure to lay the case down on a flat surface before opening it.
9. Your seeds should sprout within a week to 10 days, depending on the type of seeds you used. Once the seeds sprout, you can remove one layer of the paper towel to observe the roots forming.

BECOME A PLANT SCIENTIST

EXPERIMENT 1

Supplies needed:

- Three stalks of celery with leaves still intact
- Three tall glasses or ball jars, with water
- Spoon
- Food coloring

Steps:

1. Fill three jars halfway with water and add a different color food coloring to each jar; stir. Add enough food coloring so that the water is fairly dark. Red, green and blue are good colors to use for this.
2. Trim ½" off the bottom of each celery stalk and place one in each jar.
3. Place jars in a sunny location.
4. Check the celery daily to make observations. What is happening to the food coloring? Does one color appear to absorb better? How can you tell? This experiment lends itself well to a discussion of plant parts and their functions. What plant part is a celery stalk, and what is its purpose? What about roots, leaves, flowers, fruits, and seeds—what are their functions? (Refer to your root top garden and/or root vue box to observe roots in action and discuss their function).
5. For an explanation of plant parts, visit: www.mbgnet.net/bioplants/parts.html
6. Further investigation: After the celery stalks have been in the water for a day or two, cut a slice off of the bottom of each stalk. What do you notice?