

GARDEN WITH US!

at COASTAL MAINE BOTANICAL GARDENS

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GROW A SWEET POTATO PLANT

Recommended Age: Ages 5 and up

Length of time required: 15 minutes

Supplies needed:

- Sweet potato
- Toothpicks
- A tall glass or container that is big enough to hold 2/3 of your potato, like a wide mouth ball jar or large yogurt container.

Steps:

1. Fill a container $\frac{3}{4}$ full of water.
2. Locate the pointy end of the potato. This end of the potato will be in the water. Place four toothpicks evenly into the side of the potato about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way up, forming a ring around the potato.
3. Place the sweet potato in the container filled with water. The toothpicks will help to hold the top $\frac{1}{3}$ of the potato above the water.
4. Place in a sunny window and add more water to the container as needed, keeping it $\frac{3}{4}$ full. In a few weeks, sweet potato vines will begin to sprout from your potato.
5. Once the vines develop a few leaves, you can pinch them off of the potato and add to a glass of water placed in a sunny window to help them form roots.
6. These baby sweet potato plants with roots are called slips and can be planted in a sunny location in your garden in late May here in Maine, earlier in warmer climates. Space individual slips one foot apart in mounded garden bed. Tip: Sweet potato plants need a long, warm growing season to be produce tubers.

Plus: Did you know that sweet potato leaves are edible?

SEED POD PRINTED ORNAMENTS

Recommended Age: Ages 2 and up

Length of time required: 1 hour

Supplies needed:

- Seed pods, such as: pinecones, alder cones, Echinacea seed heads, acorn caps, milkweed pods, magnolia or dogwood seed pods
- Clay, salt dough or play-doh
- Cookie cutters

Steps:

1. Take a walk around your yard or neighborhood to search for seed pods. You are looking for seed pods that have a lot of texture. These will make the best prints. Look for various types of cones-pine, fir and spruce as well as alder cones that are still attached to the tree. Also be on the lookout for last year's seed heads that might still be attached to plants. If you haven't cleared out last year's growth in your flower beds yet, you might still have interesting seed pods like ones from Echinacea, Black-eyed Susan and sunflowers. Magnolias and dogwoods might also be holding onto last year's seed pods. Grab those if you are lucky enough to have one growing in your yard.
2. Roll out your clay or dough to $\frac{1}{2}$ " thickness. Use the seed pods you collected to make impressions by "stamping" them on the clay or dough.
3. If you have used clay or salt dough, you can use cookie cutters to cut out different shapes where you printed on the clay. Poke a hole at the top of the shape with a pencil and allow to dry. Now you have a nature ornament to display or give to a friend!

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MAKE A GRASS HEAD!

Supplies needed:

- Old pantyhose, tights or knee high
- Potting soil, garden soil or sawdust
- Grass seeds are preferred, but other small seeds will work. Tip: If you end up using seeds other than grass, your plants may not be able to poke up through the panty hose as easily once they start growing. If this is the case, simply cut a small slit in the top of the panty hose and pull it open enough for the plant to grow up through.
- Rubber bands or hair ties
- Small yogurt container
- Permanent marker
- Glue
- *Optional:* Decorations such as googly eyes, pipe cleaners, construction paper, buttons, fabric etc. for making a face and body for your grass head.

Steps:

1. Cut an 8" section off of your pantyhose or pair of tights that includes the toe.
2. Stretch the pantyhose over a large glass or mug and add 1 teaspoon of grass seed or other seed.
3. Add soil or sawdust to the pantyhose, packing it down and adding enough to make the finished head about the size of a tennis ball. Tie off the pantyhose when done. Don't cut off the extra pantyhose as this part will be helpful later for watering your grass head.
4. To make a nose or ears on your grass head, grab a small bit of the pantyhose filled with soil, twist and secure with a rubber band or hair tie.
5. Now it's time to decorate your grass head! Use permanent markers to draw a face on the head or use hot glue to add googly eyes, eyebrows, lips, etc. You can also decorate the yogurt container at this time to be the body of your grass head. Use construction paper, fabric, felt and buttons to make clothes for your grass head.
6. Lightly water your grass head under the shower setting of your sink. Fill your yogurt container halfway with water and place the grass head in the yogurt container, letting the extra piece of the pantyhose hang into the water. The pantyhose will absorb the water in the yogurt container, helping to keep your soil moist.
7. Place your finished grass head with body in a sunny window and water as needed. Keep the soil/sawdust moist until the seeds sprout by adding more water to the yogurt container and lightly watering from above.
8. The seeds should sprout in about a week. Let the hair grow for another three to four weeks for a full head of hair.

Recommended Age: Ages 5 and up

Length of time required: 1 hour