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An Observation Walk in Autumn

Science skills

Children ask questions about nature and practice classification and fine motor skills.

Materials

Four shoe boxes
Four index cards

Four crayons or markers: orange, red,
brown and yellow

What to do

1. Using four index cards, print the name of one of the four colors listed above on each card. For example, print BROWN with a brown marker. Tape each card onto one of the shoe boxes.
2. Put the boxes on the science or discovery table.
3. The teacher brings four differently colored leaves into the classroom and shows them to the children. Discuss the four colors and find various objects with those colors in the proper room.
4. Take the children on an observation walk to gather various colored leaves.
5. Bring the leaves back to the classroom and children take turns placing them in the color-coded boxes.

More to do

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More science: Keep the boxes on the science table for about a week so children may continue to add leaves and other collected natural items to them.

Elaine Commins, Atlanta, GA

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Fall Wreath

Science skills

Children think about and search for signs of fall, then create their own display of natural seasonal items.

Materials

Heavy white paper (watercolor paper or tagboard works well)

Red or orange watercolor paints or crayons

Hole puncher

Glue

Red yarn

Fall objects such as dried leaves, milkweed seeds, acorns, pressed flowers, berries, wheat stalks

Fall

What to do

1. Cut wreath shapes out of paper and punch a hole at the top of each.
2. The children can paint or color the wreath shape. Let dry.
3. While the wreaths are drying, go outside on a fall hunt for items such as acorns, dried leaves, twigs, etc.
4. Back inside, spread the items out on a table. Let the children select the fall items they want for their wreath and glue them on.
5. When the wreaths are dry, tie yarn in a loop through the hole at the top of the wreath for hanging.

More to do

Art: Make other seasonal wreaths. For spring, make heart-shaped wreaths and use paper doilies and dried flowers tied with pink ribbons. For summer, make a beach wreath using dribbled sand, seaweed, shells, bay leaves, pebbles, etc. For winter, use cones from different evergreens (especially little hemlock cones), nuts like almonds, whole cinnamon and star-shaped anise, nutmeg gold stars and red ribbon.

Math: Collect extra fall items and place in a basket for sorting or counting practice.

Related books

Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf by Lois Ehlert

Chicken Soup with Rice by Maurice Sendak

■ Linda Atamian, Charlestown, RI

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Leaves Change Color

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Science skills

Children learn new words for leaf pigments.

Materials

Why Do Leaves Change Color? by Betsy Maestro

Fall leaves of various colors

What to do

1. Read the book and discuss with the children the color change process.
2. Tell the children the names of the pigments responsible for the change: xanthophyll, carotene and anthocyanin.
3. Take the children on a fall walk to collect colored leaves.
4. Gather them together in a group and teach the pigment names using the leaves as visual aids and the rhyme below.