

Seasons

Small sponges, cut from a large sponge into 2" x 3" (5 cm x 7.5 cm) pieces
Crayons or felt-tipped markers
Pencils
Scissors
Stapler
Optional: pink or white tissue paper cut into 2" (5 cm) squares, white glue

What to do

1. To make the tree trunk pattern, fold a sheet of paper into fourths, and paste the outline of a tree trunk in each of the four sections. Leave enough space in each section so the children can add branches to the trunks. Draw lines between each of the four sections. Under each tree trunk write one of the four seasons: fall, winter, spring or summer. Duplicate the sheet of four trees for each child.
2. Read to the children a book about trees and their changes throughout the seasons. Discuss the changes with the class. Go outside and look at real trees.
3. Let the children cut on the lines so that they have four pages. Help those children who need it.
4. Complete the pages as follows: For fall, sponge paint fall colors onto the tree above the trunk. For winter, color the tree trunk and add bare branches. For the spring tree, use pastel colors to make blossoms on the tree or use tissue paper to make small flowers to glue onto the tree branches. For summer, paint or color green leaves on the tree.
5. After the pages dry, staple them together to make tree books.
6. Read aloud with the children the words under their trees.

More to do

More science: Plan a field trip to look at seasonal trees in a park, or take a walk in the neighborhood.

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Related books

Have You Seen Trees? by Joanne Oppenheim
Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf by Lois Ehlert
Squirrels by Brian Wildsmith

Barbara Saul, Eureka, CA

The Four Seasons

3+

Science skills

Children learn about the seasons in this hands-on activity.

Materials

4 shallow trays
Water
Crushed leaves
Sand

Grass seed
Small animal and people figures
Small bowl
Masking tape

What to do

1. Beforehand, prepare the trays. For the spring tray, spread dirt on a tray, sprinkle it with grass seed and water the seeds. It will take a few days for the grass to grow. For the winter tray, freeze water in a tray. To make the fall tray, collect dried leaves, crush them and put them on a tray. For the summer tray, spread sand on the last tray and add a shallow bowl of water for a beach area. Add to the trays any other seasonal items, such as flowers, a plastic snowman or evergreen tree, a pumpkin and seashells.
2. Divide the science table into four parts using masking tape. Label each section with a season. For very young children, add pictures to depict the seasons. Place the trays on the appropriate section. Encourage the children to touch and handle the materials in the trays.
3. Use this hands-on approach to help children distinguish and interact with the seasons.

More to do

Games: Once the children can distinguish between the seasons, mix up the picture/word cards, and play a season identification game.

More science: Put the trays on the floor and let the children explore the sense of touch by feeling the contents of the trays with their bare feet.

Patricia Moeser, McFarland, WI

3+

The Year-Round Pumpkin

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Science skills

Children use all their senses to observe changes, and they are encouraged to ask questions about nature.

Materials

Ripe pumpkin
Carving tools
Garden area

What to do

1. Bring a pumpkin into the classroom.
2. Let children observe and explore it. How big around is it? Is it heavy? Are there any bumps or bruises?
3. Carve the pumpkin into a jack-o'-lantern and save the seeds.
4. Let the children explore the jack-o'-lantern by looking at the insides, at the pulp and by smelling and touching it.
5. Leave the jack-o'-lantern in the classroom for a few days. After Halloween is over, tell the children you will put the jack-o'-lantern out in the garden and they can watch what happens to it. Introduce the idea of decomposition, and observe the changes at regular intervals. Have any animals nibbled it? What color is it now? Is it still round?