

Taste, Touch, Smell, Hear, See, and Do!

Engaging a child's five senses and adding movement are critical in expanding appreciation for the garden. Tasting mint, smelling lemon balm or lavender, feeling the warmth of the sun in a tomato, picking oregano leaves to dry and save...experiences only the garden can provide.

Below is a list of ideas for engaging students in value-added experiences. These activities can be welcome activities or stations in a classroom practiced by all, hands-on experiences at a family event, or an opportunity for a student to choose. Consider placing footsteps or tape on the floor to guide students or families from one station to the other. Use simple signs (touch, see, smell, etc) to provide a one-word instruction of what to do.

Touch -

Fill container gardens with herbs and vegetables. Identify the plants with stakes painted by students. A simple sign that says "Touch" gives permission to touch the leaves and flowers – even pick them. A small bowl or piece of paper at this station can collect the picked leaves. These herbs and vegetables can be smelled in addition to touched.

Taste -

Provide cubes of bread that can be dipped into herb-infused olive oil. (Students can add the herbs to the olive oil.) Herbed butters or cream cheese can also be tried. Mint and other edible herbs or vegetables can be tasted.

Provide small, cherry tomatoes. Allow students to bite into them or pop the whole thing into their mouths. This can be duplicated with many vegetables from the garden that can be eaten raw.

Smell -

Using a mortar and pestle, muddle lavender. Zest a lemon. Pinch dill and "smell pickles."

SEE -

Arranging flowers: Have a large pitcher full of various flowers. Around the large pitcher place small vases and bottles and another smaller pitcher of water. Allow students to select flowers from the larger vase, use scissors to cut the stems, and arrange the flowers in the smaller vases.

Use handlenses to take a closer look at flowers, seeds, leaves, or even the center star of an apple.

Hear -

Provide a vegetable or herb chopper (not a knife) and a cutting board to chop chives and carrots. Listen for the sound of the chopper hitting the cutting board. Bite into a crunchy apple and listen.

Place cornflakes in a big plastic baggie and crush with a rolling pin. Cornflakes can be used in many garden recipes.

DO -

Peel a carrot or crinkle cut a carrot (using the vegetable chopper) – depending on the skill set of the children in the group. Provide a cutting board and plate with a carrot, peeler, safe chopper, and a bowl.

Scrub a potato – place a few potatoes in a pan of water with scrubbers.

Roll the dough – roll dough into different shapes like a ball, a pretzel, a snake, a roll, etc. This is good practice for baking with herbs and vegetables from the garden. Herbed bread is a great class recipe!

Pick thyme or coriander – pick the leaves and seeds of these herbs and put them in a jar. This is a great fine motor activity.