

How does your garden grow?

Host a garden party at your center and use this time to reinforce messages about sun safety, healthy eating and physical activity with your children.



Use the following tips to plan your party:

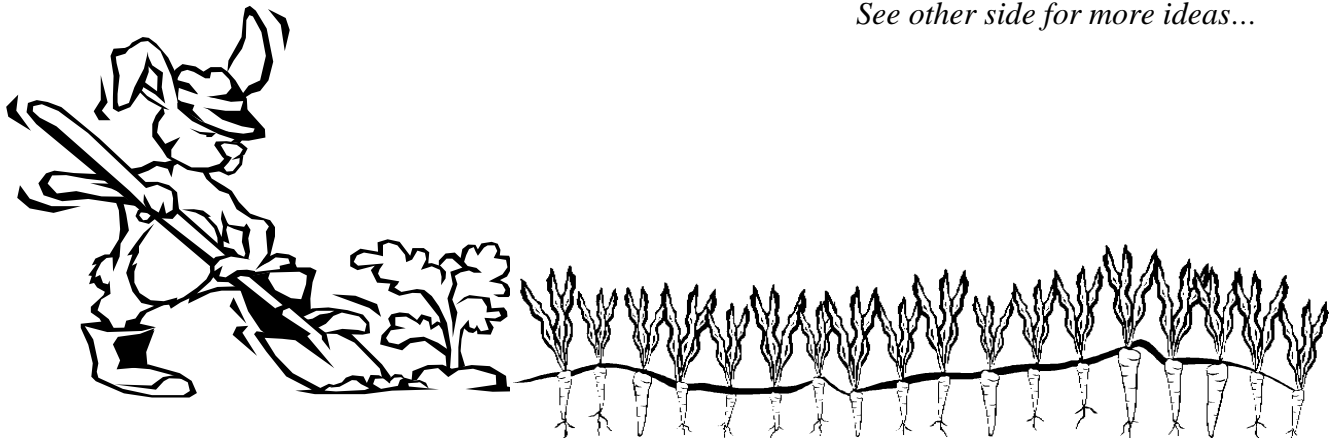
Before going out to the garden, make sure children are dressed appropriately. Send a flyer home to parents and guardians asking them to send sunglasses and hats with children on the day of the garden party. Remind parents and guardians to apply sunscreen to the children before they arrive at your center.

Garden hats! Have children bring in a hat from home to decorate. Provide pom-poms, artificial flowers, fabric scraps and other materials the children can use to decorate their hats. Encourage children to wear their hats when outside to protect their faces from the sun so that they do not get sunburned.

Watering can relay! Plan to do this activity outside. You will need two small plastic watering cans and four containers such as washtubs or plastic trashcans that can hold water. Divide the children into two teams. One child at a time on each team will fill a watering can with water from a water-filled washtub. They will race 20 feet to an empty washtub (one washtub for each team) and empty the water into the tub. They then race back and hand the empty watering can to the next child in line to refill and race down to the tub. The team that is able to fill the washtub up first wins. (Use a shady area for this activity, if available, to reinforce the sun safety message.) When you are finished, use this water to water your plants.

Bug hunt! Instead of an egg hunt, have a bug hunt. Print out some bugs from clip art and paste them on heavy weight paper. Put bugs in various places outside or inside. Give each child a small brown paper bag to decorate and use to collect bugs. Have the children find the bugs and place them in their bags. See how many bugs each child can get. A second way to do this is to limit the number of bugs each child can get, asking each child to find three or four bugs.

See other side for more ideas...



It's raining it's pouring! Play some music -- any kind of music -- and have children do a “rain dance.” Let them pretend to be drops of rain falling from the sky or flowers and plants that grow when the rain hits them. Have fun, and don't be afraid to be silly.

Snack time! On the day of your garden party, when you can, use new plastic garden tools to serve snacks. Pour drinks from a watering can or scoop out snacks from a bucket with a gardening shovel. Or, serve snacks in plastic flowerpots. Be creative.

Pear bunnies! Create cute healthy and edible bunnies for your hungry gardeners. You will need canned pear halves, lettuce leaves, a can of light whipped cream and edible ingredients to make bunny ears (such as marshmallow or banana pieces), bunny noses (such as a dried cranberry) and bunny eyes (such as raisins). Place a few lettuce leaves on each plate. Top the lettuce leaves with a pear half, rounded side up. Squirt a tail on the larger end of the pear with the whipped cream and use the remaining ingredients to decorate the bunny's face.

Banana snakes! To make these fun garden snakes you will need a banana for each child, peanut butter*, small thin slices of red pepper and raisins. Slice the banana into ½-inch chunks. Next, spread the peanut butter on the cut sides of the banana and piece the banana back together. Stick eyes (raisins) onto the head of the banana using small dabs of peanut butter. Use the red pepper slice to make a tongue. *For those with nut allergies use light cream cheese in place of peanut butter.

Bug juice! (Some of you may remember this drink as a Purple Cow.) It may sound odd, but kids really like this drink. For about 20 servings you will need 5 (6 ounce) cans of frozen 100% juice purple grape juice concentrate, 5 cups of fat free milk, 5 teaspoons of vanilla and about 50 ice cubes. Place all ingredients in a blender and serve. (Another option is to simply take the frozen concentrate and add it to the milk until the drink takes on an eye-catching purple color.)

Have fun with these ideas and add your own creative touches as you go. For more activities that reinforce sun safety and encourage physical activity and for healthy snack ideas, visit the Anne Arundel County Department of Health's Alex the Alligator Web site at www.aahelath.org/alex.asp.

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