

dandelions

Early Childhood
Learning Activity Unit

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DANDELIONS ... discover nature's springtime delight!

DANDELIONS are gay, gold coins which polka-dot spring's soft, green, carpeted world. These provocative early spring gifts captivate children's enthusiasm and curiosity for some exotic hands-on learning. Bouquets of fringed orange-yellow blossoms that children gather can spark activities readily integrated into many curriculum areas. For child and adult, fact, fancy and fun go hand in hand with honest research and fascinating appreciation of nature's wonder-weed.

THINK ABOUT QUESTIONS:

1. Why do children like dandelions?
2. Why do grown-up people dislike dandelions?

BECOME research partners when you are sciencing with your children. Sharpen your observation skills and search for specimens together. Exploring the outdoor area around the school or taking a "dandelion walk" are helpful ways to begin. It is great fun to discover them in usual and unusual places. Record and keep a list of the different places. A possible list might include:

- in the grass
- along the wall of the school building
- next to a lamp post or telephone pole
- at the base of a STOP sign
- poking out of the curbing or a crack
- in the sidewalk
- saying "hello" from between a brick wall
- and the sidewalk

Lists will vary in kind and in number depending where you live!

THINK ABOUT QUESTIONS:

1. Where are dandelions found?
2. Why can dandelions be found in so many different places?

EXPLORE the before and after changes occurring from one day to the next, in the school yard or a nearby field. The gold-speckled field of the previous day magically becomes full of fluffy-white cotton balls. Transparent, gray, fragile, and firm they seem to saucily stare and ask, "How come?" "Can you guess what magic is in us?" "Isn't this fun?" "Play with us?" "How? Now? Blow! Go!" Be sure to look closely, using your magnifying glass! Touch and Talk.

THINK ABOUT QUESTIONS:

1. Why can you make the white ball blow apart by blowing on it?
2. How does it land and start a new plant?



SELECT some specimens and bring them back to the classroom. Be sure to include:

- cut flowers and leaves
- whole plants or clumps which have been gently prodded or dug out of the soil-
- vary sizes whenever possible.

To make your study more intriguing, arrange the specimens in assorted containers - such as glass bowls, jars or vases, decanters, terrariums as well as a plastic tub. Add water and observe over a period of days. Keep in a bright, sunny spot. Magnifying glasses are useful observing tools for keener scrutiny of the flower, leaves, stem and roots. "Hands-on" means touching and exploring plant parts. Make some available on a tray for this purpose. Interacting with real objects, peers, and adults is vital to the hands-on process.

THINK ABOUT QUESTIONS:

1. How do you think the dandelion got its name?
2. How many things can we do with our specimens to learn more about them?



NOTICE another change a few days later. The green grass is crisp, stubby, neatly cropped. No gold. No white. Where, oh, where are the dandelions? This is a challenge for some super detectives. The dandelion plants are there! Who can find them?

THINK ABOUT QUESTIONS:

1. How can you find dandelions now?
2. How long must we wait before the golden flowers return?

DANDELION MATH TASKS

TRY these alone, in small or large groups. Some children can work independently using task cards. Others will need teacher direction. These tasks flow readily as a result of the keen observations children have made so far.

- Pick and arrange dandelions in bunches of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Match a numeral card to these.
- Estimate the number of mini-bunches or bouquets in one dandelion flower. Pull apart. Count and check your guess.
- Count the number of leaves on one plant.
- Compare with the number on a different plant.
- Compare lengths of leaves. Which are shorter? longer?
- Count the number of "teeth" on a leaf. Find out if all leaves on the same plant have the same number of "teeth."
- Choose several stems. Compare and measure the lengths. Draw lines to match each stem. Label your work.
- Make families of flowers, leaves, stems (classify.)
- Classify parts of the dandelion according to short, tall, straight, curved, smooth and pointed.

THINK ABOUT QUESTIONS:

- What patterns can you make using flowers, stems, leaves? Draw or glue your pattern. Share with a friend.
- What shapes can you find on a dandelion plant? Make a list with a friend or the teacher.



DANDELION MAKE-ITS

PLAN, PLAY, PRETEND using some of these fun activities your children will find pleasing and satisfying. These activities will provide opportunities to synthesize and share their knowledge in a variety of ways.

- Trace around one or more leaves. Color. Then mount the real leaf beside the one it matches or in a free arrangement.
- Print with dandelion flowers. Dip flower in yellow tempera, and then press gently on colorful construction paper. Create different designs using your dandelion.
- Make a nature collage. Use only parts of the dandelion plant. Arrange and glue on cardboard or a paper plate.
- Make a sequence collage picture. Show the four stages of growth.
- Make a dandelion book for the family. Include a fact, fancy and fun page, poems and pictures. Make a cut and paste picture for the cover.
- Dictate individual and group stories of real experiences. Draw pictures for "On Our Dandelion Walk," "The Dandelion I Found."
- Create pretend stories - then act the story out or work into a dance to tell the story. Pretend story ideas which might be fun are:
 "If I Were a Dandelion"
 "The Magic Silver Ball" or
 "The Story of Lovely Yellow and the White Cotton Ball"
- Read and enjoy the book Hello Dandelion.
- Read, enjoy and dramatize "Dandelion" by D. Freeman.
- Dedicate a day to dandelions called Dandelion Day:

Include an exhibit of all work done by children.
 Invite another class or the family to view the display.
 Interest other children and adults in learning about and appreciating dandelions.

THINK ABOUT QUESTIONS:

- Can you make up a song about dandelions?
- How can you help grown-ups to appreciate dandelions?

DANDELION BRAINSTORM



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	FACTS	FANCY	FUN
Flowers	word power cluster bunches weed specimen yellow heads fringed perennial	imagination lion's mane bride's bouquet	things to do make bracelets and necklaces pick a bouquet play butter game
Leaves	ragged edged greens sharp teeth pointing down edible bitter tender shoots	lion's tooth dent de lion (French)	eat tender shoots in a salad cook like spinach and eat
Root	tap clump tough hairs roast dig deep	spikes claws foothold	roast and grind for coffee-like beverage
Stem	hollow tube strawlike bendability sturdy silvery juice	flexible split fat handle	split end to join for necklace blow bubbles measure
Seeds	silky white tufts dispersal silky hair slender slender seed gray sphere	parachute inside-out umbrella clocks blow balls pompons feathery plume	blow puffball to tell time plant a seed blow and enjoy!



THINK ABOUT QUESTIONS:

- Can you invent a new name for the dandelion?
- Can you invent a new game using dandelions?