

Outdoor Classroom Tools and Treasures

Bottle Trees

Enslaved African-Americans brought the tradition of the bottle tree over to the North American continent with them. Take a small dead tree and trim the low hanging branches down and place different size and color bottles over each branch nub. It was believed that the bottle tree would attract evil or ancestral spirits and keep them away from the house. Today, they make beautiful sun-catchers in outdoor classrooms.

Bug Boxes

Baby food Jars

Old baby food jars make great temporary insect examination jars. Just poke some holes in the top so the insects can breath. These are great for studying aquatic insects too.

Plastic Clamshell Containers

Collect the plastic containers that fast food restaurant salads come in for an insect or small critter container. Use an Exacto knife to cut a square opening in the cover. Cut a piece of screen material slightly larger than the opening and glue over the opening, decorate (glue pine needles, leaves, or twigs to the container), and add critters.

Cardboard Clipboards

Cut a piece of corrugated cardboard down to 10 1/2 inches wide x 12 inches long. Place a piece of paper on the cardboard and hold it down with two clothespins or one rubber band placed around the top of the clipboard. In addition, make a hole in the bottom corner of the clipboard and tie one end of string (string should be approximately 2 ft in length) to the hole and the other end to a pencil.

Compost Carrier

Take a plastic milk jug and cut the top and the edge away from the handle off of the jug. Decorate the jug with permanent markers. Place kitchen scraps in the jug and carry the scraps to the compost bin when ready.

Newspaper Ground Cover

To reduce weed growth in the school garden area, paths, and/or trails, place layers of newspaper down before mulching.

Plant Pots

Donated Plant Pots

Have parents donate their old plant pots or the plant pots used in stores for plant purchase (but often discarded when transplanted).

Tub Plant Pots

Butter/margarine plastic tubs, cottage cheese tubs, and similar plastic containers can be painted and turned into plant pots.

Seed Starters

**Refer to Science activities for additional plant ideas.

Collect egg cartons and put soil in each egg carton compartment. Place one seed in each egg

compartment. Once the plant outgrows the egg carton ~ transplant them in the school garden (plastic aerosol can lids make great seed starter containers too).

Watering Can

Take a plastic milk jug and poke several holes in the side opposite of the handle. Decorate the jug with permanent markers. You now have a milk jug watering can.