

The dig pit

It can sometimes be tricky to spot wildlife on your site, but there's a whole world of life right under our feet! Getting muddy and exploring underground can be a learner's first real insight into how things in nature are interconnected. By interacting with soil, learners begin to explore plant anatomy, rock formation, soil composition, living and non-living things, safe tool use, changing states of matter and minibeasts (decomposers).

Teaching time

Continuous provision station

Learning outcomes

- explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants
- know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class
- understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter

Step by step

A dig pit can be created in a small space. It's best to find a non-concreted area and clearly mark the digging zone with rope to ensure children are aware of the boundaries. Learning will evolve with the dig pit over time.

If your setting has no natural surfaces, you could use a container and fill it with soil and rocks – this could also be achieved indoors with a tuff tray.

It's likely that children will find insects while digging, providing the opportunity to discuss their role as decomposers. Example: worms eat dead things and turn them into soil. Soil helps plants to grow, and plants help to create clean air for us to breathe.

Posing 'I wonder' questions can support learners to discuss the importance of worms (see below).

Remember to tell learners that it's safe to touch worms for a short period but for the worms to remain healthy and happy, they should largely remain wet and in the soil. Once learners have finished exploring the dig pit, they should be in the routine of washing their hands.

'I wonder' statements

- I wonder what would happen if there were no worms?
- I wonder if worms prefer dry or damp soil?
- I wonder how many layers there are?
- I wonder what the soil is made up off?
- I wonder what the insects eat?
- I wonder how old this rock is?

Green Skills



Suitable for

Early Years

Location

Indoors
Outdoors

Season

Spring
Summer
Autumn
Winter

What you'll need

A clearly marked zone for your dig pit, or a container

Soil, stones and other natural materials to fill your dig pit

Trowels

Watering cans

Spades

Toothbrushes

Handwashing facilities nearby

Key vocabulary

Soil

Decomposer

Support and extension opportunities

For more activities supporting the Understanding the World Early Learning Goal, see the Understanding the World overview page, or filter for resources by Subject.



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