



Let's Make a Gardening Sensory Bin

Children who are blind or visually impaired need to experience nature. Even if your child can't see a flower, they can touch the petals, smell its fragrance and listen to how it sounds swaying in the breeze. Gardening together is one way to help your child develop an understanding of the outside and how things grow.



Some children with blindness or visual impairments are easily overwhelmed by new textures or smells; others have limited mobility that makes getting outside more challenging.

You can still teach concepts about nature by making a gardening sensory bin, which is a storage tub, dish pan or other container filled with things you can touch, smell, listen to, or even taste with your kiddo.

To play with the bin, just pick up and experience the items. Talk about their color. Mention other things in your

home or your yard that are the same color. Use other meaningful words to describe the object - its shape, texture or the sound it makes - so your child will recognize the object in other ways besides visually. If your child eats by mouth, talk about the foods your child is eating and maybe one of them is in the sensory bin!

As you explore the bin together, take turns between letting your child explore quietly on his own and talking to him about what he's doing. "You found the shovel! The handle is smooth. Now, you're digging. You're holding a flower - it smells good. That rock is bumpy. Bang, bang, bang on the bowl - that's loud! You put the rock back IN the bowl."

Don't forget to be sensitive to your child's personality. For some children, introducing new items can feel a bit overwhelming. For children who are hesitant to touch new objects, try introducing new items one at a time or at their feet first to allow them to "warm up" to the idea.

Make a Gardening Sensory Bin

To make a gardening sensory bin, first cover the bottom of a tub or dish pan with dried white beans or rice; if your child is more adventurous, use potting soil but just make sure he doesn't put it in his mouth. Fill the pan with things you might associate with a garden - a plastic shovel, rocks or large pebbles with interesting texture or colors, a packet of seeds that makes noise when you shake it, a pine cone that's not prickly, a real flower or vegetable from the garden. What's important is that they are everyday things you find in a garden or your own yard. Don't put too much in the bin or it will be overwhelming to your child and hard to find single items to touch.

Get Creative!

Once you've made one sensory bin, it's easy to get creative and come up with your own themes. Make sure the items you put in your bin don't pose a choking risk for your child. If the item fits inside a toilet paper tube, it's probably too small. You don't have to use a plastic bin either; a large stainless- steel bowl is wonderfully reflective and makes a great sound when your child drops a toy in it. Pinterest has many great ideas here:

<https://www.pinterests.com/officialperkins/tactile-sensory-activities-for-children-who-are-vi/?!p=true>.

Or you can talk to your Early Intervention Teacher of the Visually Impaired from A Shared Vision for more sensory bin suggestions.