



*AMC Montessori
Spring 2012 Hands-On
Creative Lesson
Planning Newsletter*

The AMC Montessori Newsletter

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Heidi Anne Spietz, Editor

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<http://www.amonco.org>

The AMC resource participants have generously shared hands-on activities that you will want to use in coming months. You'll be impressed with the ingenuity and creativity expressed in the recipes and crafts they have chosen to share with you. Use their ideas to foster interest in science, social studies, art, mathematics, and other academic hands-on learning activities. Integrate the recipes and crafts into your multicultural lesson planning as well.

Hopefully, you will let the participants know how much you have enjoyed their recipe(s) and craft(s). Visit the websites listed throughout the newsletter. You'll find additional helpful lesson information at these sites.

American Montessori Consulting is not responsible for any of the crafts or recipes posted here. All of the crafts and recipes are copyrighted and are the property of the participating AMC resource organizations listed in this newsletter. For questions concerning their individual copyrighted material, you need to visit the website listed in association with the craft(s) and recipe(s) that interest you and obtain the telephone number and/or e-mail address of the contact person(s).

If you would like friends on special listservs to know of this newsletter, please request that they download the newsletter directly from

http://www.amonco.org/montessori_spring_handson.html

Use special precautions when involving children in any craft or recipe where there is a potential for harm. Some children have special food allergies and/or other medical conditions like diabetes. Small children need supervision. Scissors, hot glue, hot stoves and ovens, and other elements in making some of these recipes and crafts need to be considered. Please consider carefully the age and maturity level of the child before allowing him or her to participate.

Be sure to visit each resource participant's site to see the marvelous selection of educational offerings you can use in your school and home classrooms. You'll also find creative, unique educational gift items that are sure to be enjoyed by the special young people in your life.

The following creative ideas are from the AMC Montessori Resource Center <http://www.amonco.org/directory.html> participants. Visit their websites for additional innovative ways to reach your students throughout the school year.



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Cantemos

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Website: <http://www.cantemosco.com/>

Activities Submitted by Georgette Baker

Make a Festive Hat for Easter, Cinco de Mayo, Mother's Day and more...

Spring is on its way and so is Easter, Cinco de Mayo, Mother's Day and of course children's birthdays. Make a beautiful hat out of newspaper or butcher paper.

NEWSPAPERS need three sheets

1. Put large sheets of newspapers on child's head in a varied patten (not evenly together.
2. Have child hold paper in place on his/her head as you use masking take to shape the band of the hat. (find child's brow area, start the tape there and work it tightly around once so that hat will fit child's head)
3. Grab ends of newspaper in front of child's face and roll into a brim, work your way around the entire head, tape where necessary.
4. Decorate with flowers, feathers, cut outs, whatever the theme.

Same hat can be made with one sheet of butcher paper 3'x3' tape is necessary only to form the shape of the head area, the paper is stiff enough that it doesn't require tape on the brim.

More Foreign Language Fun From the Cantemos Lesson Plan Library

Periquito: the story of Little Parakeet

Original story by Georgette Baker, teacher, multicultural performer and music producer

Cantemos Bilingual Books and Music
email: bakergeorgette@yahoo.com

Grade level: pre-K, K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Description: students will learn the words and movements to the "Periquito" song. the song will be learned in Spanish and simple vocabulary will be introduced. Students will also learn animals of the jungle, desert, forest or farm (at the teacher's discretion). A follow-up story wheel will be made so students can retell story at home.

GOAL: introduce children to:

a Spanish song

Spanish vocabulary and pronunciation

animals from another part of the world

storytelling which allows for creativity and language mastery

enthusiasm for music from another country

sharing with family song, music, language acquisition and follow-up story wheel with family

MATERIALS:

2 paper plates for each child

crayons or colored pencils

paper fastener for each child

scissors

CD player or cassette player

sheet with Periquito and other animals from story available from Cantemos

story/song of PERIQUITO-from Simple Spanish Sing Along Songs

CANTEMOS-bilingual books and music <http://www.simplespanishsongs.com>

PREPARATIONS

- 1.purchase story of PERIQUITO
- 2.listen to story and song and be familiar with movements to be taught
- 3.cue song

PROCEDURES:

1. introduce children to vocabulary in song
2. teach song
3. sing song with music and movement.
 - a. "por arriba" point up and have children follow your movements
 - b. "por abajo" point down
 - c. "por delante" point to chest
 - d. "por detrás" point to back (I touch behind my shoulders)
4. Tell story of Periquito in English or play CD or tape and have children join in for:
walking sounds by clapping hands three times, when Periquito walks
pointing in the direction song indicates
indicating in repeating sentence "I'm not your Pop, but I know who you are."
point to self "I'm not your Pop" point in front as if to another "but I know who you are."
5. Ask children to suggest an animal that has been introduced by the teacher or use animals from song: tiger, elephant, giraffe, alligator
6. Students make story telling wheel to take home and retell story to their family

VOCABULARY:

por arriba : from the top, on top of

por abajo : from the bottom, underneath

por delante: from the front, in front of

por detras: from the back, behind

te pareces a tu papá: you look just like your Pop

periquito: little parakeet

SING A SONG IN SPANISH

Los Pollitos is a traditional children's song learned in all Spanish speaking countries. Children can learn the song and the hand movements to go with it as well as the English translation (performed to the same movements). A lesson plan on hatching of chicks, what they eat and how their mother keeps them safe and warm can be included.

You can hear the song performed on the Cantemos Chiquitos CD from http://www.cantemosco.com/cantemos_chiquitos.htm

Helpful hints the “Ll” in Spanish is pronounced like the “y” in yellow
All vowels have only one pronunciation and they are all sounded out
a “ah”, e “eh”, i “eee”, o “oh”, u “oooo”

LOS POLLITOS

Los pollitos dicen "pío, pío, pío" cuando tienen hambre, cuando tienen frío.
La gallina busca el maíz y el trigo, les da la comida y les presta abrigo

Acurrucaditos bajo las dos alas hasta el otro día duermen los pollitos
Hand motions for the song:

"cuando tienen hambre" “when hungry” (rub your stomach)

"cuando tienen frío" “or when cold”(cross your arms and shiver)

"la gallina busca el maíz y trigo" (move your head up and down)

"les da comida" (extend your open hand)

"y les presta abrigo" (hug yourself)

"Bajo sus dos alas acurrucaditos" "warm and safe beside her"(hug your neighbor)

"duermen los pollitos""cluck, cluck, cluck she whispers" (put your head in your hands and close your eyes)

THE LITTLE CHICKIES

See the little chickies, they aren't very old

They chirp "pio, pio" when hungry and when cold

Mother chicken scratches for something good to eat

Wheat and bits of corn, she gathers at her feet.

Warm and safe beside her , underneath her wings

"cluck, cluck, cluck," she whispers

"cluck, cluck, cluck," she sings.

EASY EASTER TIE-DYE

This simple activity requires Sharpie pens of various colors and rubbing alcohol in a bottle that allows NO MORE THAN a drop at a time to come out.

MATERIALS

Squares of white cotton cloth (5x5)

SHARPIE pens (permanent markers) no black or brown

Rubber bands (one per child)

Paper or plastic cups

Rubbing alcohol in a bottle that allows NO MORE THAN a drop at a time to come out.

PROCEDURES

Place cloth on rim of cup, hold in place with rubber band.

Allow children to gather round a table where there are a variety of colored Sharpies and draw designs of their own making on the cloth part stretched over the mouth of the glass.

Once designs are done have them place a few drops of alcohol in the center of their design. The alcohol will dissolve the ink and allow it to blur.

Alcohol will dry immediately and cloths can

1. Be given to mothers as handkerchiefs on Mother's Day,
2. Sewn together to make a large quilt for the classroom.
3. used as personal hankies

For internet resources, assemblies, an author bio, lessons from recycled instruments and other lessons please visit:

<http://www.cantemosco.com>



About Cantemos

Cantemos produces a line of children's bilingual books, music and flannel board figures. All CD's come with accompanying books of lyrics both in English and Spanish. Produced by multicultural, multilingual performer, Georgette Baker these CD's and books are for ages pre-k-6th grade. 800-393-1336, mention Montessori and receive free shipping on any Cantemos item.

All AMC readers will want to visit <http://www.cantemosco.com> for additional information about the complete product line available.



Sanford R. Wilbur, Books

Condor Tales

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Website: <http://www.condortales.com/newbooks.html>

Bird-watching with Children

Are your kids (and you) starting to get spring fever? Are you anxious to get outside and enjoy nature? Many areas of North America have had pretty severe winter weather, and for many of us, it likely is not over yet. One fun way to enjoy nature year-round is by bird-watching and/or bird feeding. Actually, February is National Bird Feeding Month, and it's a great opportunity to encourage your family's awareness of the birds all around us.

For tips and ideas to get you started, American Montessori Consulting talked to Sanford R. Wilbur, a retired wildlife biologist specializing in ornithology (the study of birds) and a lifelong recreational bird-watcher and outdoor enthusiast. Mr. Wilbur is also a father and grandfather who has had plenty of experience "birding" with children of all ages. We hope you enjoy the information he shared with us.

AMC: Thank you for taking the time to chat with us about bird-watching today. For families that are looking for engaging and educational science and nature experiences for their children, why would you recommend bird-watching, specifically?

Sanford Wilbur: Given that it's a good thing to get kids outdoors, bird-watching is an especially good way to do it. Studying any group of animals can be fun, but watching and studying most groups is not easy on a casual basis. For instance, mammals are familiar to everybody and they're easy to be interested in, but we usually see wild mammals by chance, rather than by planning. That's because a lot of them are most active at night, or in the very early morning or late evening, and most of them are very secretive. Amphibians, like frogs and toads, are favorites with kids because of their looks and activities, and they are sometimes very colorful and make wonderful noises. Unfortunately, you can usually only find a couple of common species in any given area. There are jillions of insects but, except for butterflies, it takes an expert to get very far beyond the basics of bees,

beetles, dragonflies, and such. Insects and amphibians are also hard to see outside the main spring-summer period.

On the other hand, birds of some kind are around all year, and in almost every environment. Most areas have a variety of species, which adds to the fun of identifying and keeping lists of what you see. Birds are often bright-colored; you can often tell the males and females apart by their color (which is not true for most groups of animals); their singing makes them visible and helps identify them at certain seasons; and their seasonal flocking habits make them very noticeable and interesting.

You can watch birds on your back porch, in a city park, on a wildlife refuge, or combined with other activities like hiking, camping, bicycling, etc. You can also watch for other kinds of animals or look at plants on a bird-watching outing. About the only things you can't do while trying to watch birds are riding motorcycles, shooting guns, and yelling.



AMC: You've said that we can probably find birds in any location or season. What sort of equipment or information do families really need to get started?

SRW: Bird-watching is a fairly simple hobby, and inexpensive. The only real need is for each person to have binoculars, and for someone in the group to have a bird identification book. Binoculars for beginners don't have to do more than provide a little magnification, so you can buy very inexpensive ones until you know whether this is a hobby that's going to last.

AMC: Excuse me for interrupting, Mr. Wilbur, but could several people share one pair of binoculars, if necessary?

SRW: Sure. If you're watching a pond full of ducks, you can pass the binoculars around, and everybody gets a look. But birds in bushes or hawks flying overhead often don't stay in one place very long, so some might miss out if their turn doesn't come in time. But we've often shared binoculars in our family on all-day hikes or other times when only one pair was available.

AMC: You also mentioned needing a bird book to help with identification. Can you tell us more about what to look for?

SRW: There are quite a few field guides available now, and most are pretty good. Bird species are quite different in different parts of the country, so just be sure yours either covers the whole United States or is a version that fits your locality. A new bird guide might cost \$20 or so, but since birds look the same today as they did twenty years ago, you don't necessarily need to invest in a new book right away. You can probably pick up a very serviceable used copy of a good guide for your area for a few dollars. I think I've been using some of my guidebooks for 30 or 40 years, and they still work just fine.

AMC: How about borrowing a bird guide from the local library? Would that be a practical idea?

SRW: That would be a reasonable way to start getting an idea of the birds in your area before you actually go out looking for them. But once you get outdoors, you need your own copy. That way, you won't worry about the book getting dirty (almost a certainty), or of getting its pages bent when you take it in and out of your jacket. With your own copy, you might even want to jot some notes beside the pictures of birds you see, something you wouldn't do with a library book.

AMC: That's why they call them "field guides," right?

SRW: Exactly. You can bird without carrying a guide with you - and you probably will, sometimes, as you get better at knowing what to look for on the birds you see -but it's a lot easier to look in the book just after you see the bird, rather than trying to remember later on what you saw. If you do see a bird when you don't have a bird book with you, try to pay attention to details and remember them as best you can. Carrying and jotting in a note book can help you remember such

things as the color of the head or the way the bird held its tail. Between your memory and your notes, you can sometimes visualize a bird you see well enough to do the identification when you get to where you can look it up.

AMC: If you're going to wait until you get home to do the identification, how about looking for bird identification information on the internet?

SRW: There are some sites with identification search engines and photos of common birds, but often a field guide is easier to use, especially for beginners. Guides are designed to group similar birds together in pictures, making it easier to compare the sometimes small details that differentiate one species from another.

AMC: Isn't it confusing to sort through all those different birds in the book?

SRW: Not necessarily. Birds come in a wide variety of basic sizes, shapes and colors, but those characteristics help you narrow down your search. After noticing the obvious differences, you can quickly learn to look for specific things. Most good bird books will direct your attention to characteristics like the color of the bird's throat, the color of the rump, the size and shape of the bill, whether the bird twitches its tail or not, if it goes down tree trunks rather than up, etc. It really doesn't take long to start homing in on those features, rather than just looking at the bird.

If you're starting out not knowing birds yourself, you could feel intimidated trying to help others learn. But, remember, even though there are over 500 species of birds in the United States, there are probably not more than 25 or so common ones in any given area. And you already know a lot of types of birds, even if you don't think you do. Most everyone recognizes crows, robins, blackbirds, doves, sparrows, hawks, woodpeckers, and "sea gulls." Many of the birds you see are going to look similar to some of these that you know. With a very little study of a bird guide covering your region, you will find that although there are 50 "sparrows" in the country, only two or three of them will be found in your area or in the type of environment you will be looking in. Twenty hawks become only one or two you're likely to see; most areas won't have more than one type of dove or quail, etc.

AMC: That makes sense, and it seems like knowing that would help children stay interested and not get frustrated by feeling there is "too much" to learn. Can you give any additional tips about how to get the most out of our bird-watching adventures, especially now while winter is still hanging on?

SRW: Right now, most of our bright-colored northern birds are wintering in Mexico and Central America. The biggest flocks of waterfowl have gone south to coastal Texas and Florida, and the valleys of California. But, no matter where you live, there are still birds around, and this is the time of year for backyard bird feeding. Not only is it fun to see what you can attract to your house using different kinds of food - millet seed, sunflower seeds, peanuts, suet - but a bird feeder gives one of the very best chances for seeing birds up close. Kids can get really interested in birds that come to a feeder close to a window, where even without binoculars you can often get good looks at a number of different species. This might prove to be motivation to get them out on walks farther afield as the weather improves. Winter bird feeding can often be exciting for adults, too, because providing feed when natural foods are scarce can attract unusual birds to the "easy pickings" along with the common residents.



Spring is the best time to study songbirds because they are in their most colorful plumages, and the males are actively singing, which helps you spot them. Unfortunately, spring is the worst time for bugs in many parts of the country, something that needs to be considered to keep the experience for kids (and you!) from being a discouraging one.

Summer still gives you a lot to see, but you have to work harder than in spring. The males have quit singing, and the pairs are spending a lot of time quietly on their nests. It takes more effort to spot them in the leafy summer foliage, too. Most birds are not very interested in the winter bird feeder fare of seeds and suet, because there is plenty of natural food. But hummingbirds quickly find feeders filled with sugar water, and putting out some orange halves often attracts bright-colored orioles, tanagers, or grosbeaks. Summer is also a good time to go to marshes, where you can see broods of baby ducks and geese - almost always a hit with children.

In fall, the highlights for birders are the big migrations of waterfowl, hawks, shorebirds, and warblers. Particularly in the Northeast, there are designated hawk watching spots where you can sometimes see hundreds of hawks passing overhead in a few hours. Federal and state wildlife areas are particularly good for seeing major flights of ducks and geese. Some forested areas and beach headlands can have big flights of migrating warblers and vireos, but they are in their dull fall plumages and are difficult to identify. It can still be exciting to see the large numbers, even if you can't identify them all.

In general, you can watch waterfowl, shorebirds, herons, hawks, etc., any time of the day. Songbirds are most active in the early morning; depending on the region of the country, the woods can seem pretty quiet after 9 or 10 in the morning.

AMC: Thank you very much, Mr. Wilbur. We appreciate your time and information.

More ideas for bird-watching information:

National Bird-Feeding Month (February)

<http://www.birdfeeding.org/>

National Wildlife Refuge System

<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>

National Wildlife Refuges are excellent destination for watching birds and other wildlife. Many are located in rural areas, but almost every bigger city has one relatively nearby. Most have modest entry fees, if any, and offer lots of interpretive signs, leaflets and lists to help you enjoy the areas. Many also offer driving tours, hiking trails, and other recreational opportunities.

Mr. Wilbur recommends this informative article on birding with children. You'll find many ideas and tips here:

<http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1975.html>

General information about bird identification:

http://www.birding.com/bird_identification.asp

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center's "Tools for Learning About Birds:"

<http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/ident.html>

Bird identification search engine:

http://identify.whatbird.com/mgw/_/0/attrs.aspx

Sanford Wilbur is retired after nearly 35 years with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He still watches birds, and has written several books on birds and other wildlife. He and his wife live in Oregon. Please visit

<http://www.condortales.com/newbooks.html> <http://www.condortales.com/>



Conceptual Learning

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Math Sequencing

Numeration is the basis for all math concepts. An important aspect of that understanding is the ability to sequence numbers from least to greatest. Exercises are very easy to make.

Preparation

Place a sheet of cardstock or heavy-weight paper in "landscape position." Divide paper into 24 small rectangles (six sections across, and four sections down).

Label first row with a small letter "A" in the lower right-hand corner of each

rectangle.

In the same manner, label the second row of six with the letter "B", the third row with "C", and the fourth row with a "D".

Using a fine marker, write a sequence of numbers in each row.

Cut out all the rectangles, and place them in a container such as a hardware drawer, envelope, or small zip-lock bag.

Exercise

Sort the rectangles by letter. The A's will be in one pile, the B's in another, and so on.

Spread out the cards in the "A" group so all numbers are visible.

Sequence the cards in order from least to greatest.

Below the "A" sequence, repeat the process with the "B" cards.

Sequence the "C" and "D" cards in the same way.

Types of sequences

A variety of sequences can be devised. These include one-digit, two-digit, three-digit, four digit, six-digit, odd, even, multiples, fractions, decimals, and integers..

Samples

Visit <http://www.amonco.org/decimalorder.pdf>

<http://www.amonco.org/fourdigitorder.pdf>

<http://www.amonco.org/fractionorder.pdf>

<http://www.amonco.org/Integerorder.pdf>

<http://www.amonco.org/Instructionsforexercises.pdf>

for the PDF files with instructions as well as specific exercises in four-digit, fraction, decimal, and integer sequences. Merely place cardstock or heavy-weight paper in your printer to generate the exercises. Many additional exercises are available for purchase.



About Conceptual Learning Materials

Conceptual Learning Materials is expanding its upper level math line. New developments include Percent and Advanced Geometry task cards. Scientific Notation, Order of Operations, Problem Solving F, and Mixed Practice F are in the development phase.

The company's entire math line, Insights into Math Concepts, has long been used by all levels of Montessorians to bridge concrete and abstract. Each concept is thoroughly explored through a series of exercises designed to promote discovery, build math intuition, and hone critical thinking skills. Materials are child-centered and require little adult supervision

Exercise sets come in a variety of formats and may be purchased individually or as part of discounted sets. Visit <http://www.conceptuallearning.com> or call 281-488-3252 for details.



Home-r grown "Fast Food" for Busy Families

by Sara L. Ambarian

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<http://www.condortales.com/bridestouch.html>



It doesn't take a lot of research to find out that sprouts are an impressive nutritional addition to our diet. In "The Healing Foods" (Dell Publishing, 1989), Patricia Hausman and Judith Benn Hurley call alfalfa sprouts a "Three-Star Superfood". In the family preparedness book, "Making the Best of Basics" (Gold

Leaf Press, 1997), James Talmage Stevens relates a story about a family who added sprouted grain to the diet of chicks they were raising and ended up using "25% less food" and raising chicks that "were much bigger, heartier and had less fat" than with unsprouted grain. Stevens also lauds the benefits of sprouts both as easy to prepare and easy to store.

For more specific nutritional information, take a look at this page from the International Sprout Grower's Association for starters:

<http://www.isga-sprouts.org/nutritio.htm> and this site from International Specialty Supply, a commercial sprouting supplier:

http://www.sproutnet.com/Press/sprouts_for_optimum_nutrition.htm

Certainly these websites have reason to sing the praises of the product that provides their livelihood, but they're not the only ones. Consider this fine article by organic gardening expert, Jeanne Prevett Sable, which really captures the fun, as well as the nutritional and practical advantages, of home sprouting:

<http://www.theheartofnewengland.com/garden/sprouts.html>

Home-grown edible sprouts are a first-class "fit" for many modern families, for a variety of reasons. Perhaps you can relate to some of mine. As a wife and mother, I'm always interested in providing a wholesome and nurturing home atmosphere. As a consumer, I'm concerned about the quality, freshness and safety of the food with which I nourish myself and my family. As a member of a busy family, I'm always looking for easy ways to enhance our lives without complicating them. As a resident of a cold-weather region, I'm excited about the idea of growing something fresh to eat when it's snowing outside.

I had grown edible sprouts off-and-on years ago, but fallen out of the habit. When recently I was reminded of the practice by a book I was reading, it seemed a natural for our family at this time in our lives. So I brushed up on the techniques, ordered some fresh seeds for sprouting, and started experimenting again. A few months of sprouting later, I am more enthusiastic about home-grown sprouts than I ever was before. We have found the growing process very easy to incorporate into our schedule, the array of sproutable seed varieties exciting, and the length of time the sprouts keep fresh in the refrigerator impressive (especially if you've ever had the experience of buying a box of alfalfa sprouts in the market and having them sour almost immediately, or heard the recent news about salmonella contamination of commercial sprouts.) What I've also found, however, is that living things attract attention. It's irresistible! Every time I rinse our sprouts, they've changed since the last time, and often I notice

some family member peeking over my shoulder to see how they're coming along. Frankly, I'm always curious to see how they're coming myself! Since we grow a few different varieties at different times and for different culinary uses, I also am often asked when I soak a new batch of seeds, "So what do you have in there?"

When finished, the sprouts are visually interesting. Grain sprouts are "finished" at a much smaller size than alfalfa or red clover sprouts. Radish and broccoli sprouts end up with leaves showing, like alfalfa and red clover, but are thicker, greener, less "stringy", and much bolder in flavor. I've not personally grown bean sprouts, but most of us know from eating them in various cuisines how big and succulent they are. We usually have at least two types of sprouts finished in the refrigerator at any time, and I love the way they dress up a salad, sandwich, taco, etc., with their fresh colors and interesting textures when used together. Besides, for those of you who have ever grown your own food, isn't it interesting how much more likely even the most resistant family member sometimes is to at least "try" some home-grown product? I think it's special because "we grew it", and also because this is the "finished product" of the project of growing something. If you watched it being grown or helped it grow, you're often more curious about it than if you had no personal experience with it.

I think that is one major reason why food gardening projects in general, and especially edible sprouts, teach such interesting lessons to children (and others of us who haven't had experiences of this kind). For many of us, we live far from farms and orchards, and although we all know intellectually "where food comes from", and can educate our kids about those facts, opportunities to see our food grow are few and far between. Growing your own sprouts not only allows you to grow your own food with limited space, money, and time investment, it allows you to actually watch them grow! What a neat experience for all of us, young and old!

All you really need for a simple sprout-growing experiment is:

- ~ a small quantity of seed that is grown and packaged for SPECIFICALLY sprouting (so it's free of pesticides and other potential toxins which are added to garden seeds to help them grow and be healthy)
- ~ a clean glass jar (about quart-sized is usually good)
- ~ some cheesecloth (probably available at your local grocery store, just ask)
- ~ a sturdy rubber band
- ~ a good source of cold, clean water

~ and about 3-7 days, depending on the sprout variety you are growing. There are other methods (including paper towel sprouting), and other equipment (including specially-designed sprouters), which you can try, if you like; but this is a good starter method, in my opinion. If after your first experiments, you and your family are interested in growing more sprouts (or if you know you love sprouts already), you can research and invest in more sophisticated supplies. However, for a one-time experiment, or if you just aren't sure if sprouting will fit into your lifestyle, there probably is no reason to necessarily make a bigger investment than this.

When you buy sprouting seeds, they will come with instructions specific to the type of seed they are, and you should read those carefully. Generally, however, most seeds are sprouted with variations on a couple of basically three steps: soaking, rinsing, draining, and leaving them alone so they can grow. Most seeds soak for about 8 hours, though some need to soak quite a bit less. You can soak the seeds in the jar you will use to grow them.

After soaking, you need to drain your seeds and then rinse them a few times in cold water. Cover the jar opening with one or two layers of cheesecloth (depending on how small your seeds are-- use as few layers as practical to allow as much air/water flow as possible) and secure it with a rubber band before rinsing. The cheesecloth makes it easy to add, shake, and empty the rinse water without losing any seeds. Be sure to empty as much of the water out as possible! Turn the jar upside down, shake, wait a minute or two, and shake again, repeating until you feel you have them fully-drained. Excess moisture can cause serious problems with your sprouting. The seeds get all the moisture they need through rinsing. Also, knock any seeds off of the cheesecloth and try to separate the seeds a bit within the jar by shaking. You will rinse your seeds, typically, about every 8 hours. In between, just set the jars aside, somewhere where there is good air movement, but not intense air flow or direct sun that could dry out your sprouts between rinses. Some people cover their jars with a towel to replicate the darkness underground; other people don't. We've grown them both ways and had good results both ways. Continue the rinse, drain and wait cycle consistently... and watch what happens! Your seed package/provider should give you an idea of how many days the particular sprouts you're growing should take to mature. Your time might vary a bit due to freshness of the seed, temperatures in your home, and other factors. However, the predicted sprouting time will give you a good guide so you can plan when you want to do your sprouting.

Because most sprouts take between 3 and 10 days from soak to finished sprout, each "crop" of sprouts requires a fairly short time commitment; and it offers a pretty fast "gratification". If you find that you won't have time to wait for your sprouts to fully mature, due to travel or other responsibilities that keep you from maintaining your sprouts, taste-test them as they are. You might like them even though they're not fully sprouted, and they need not be wasted. If you do like them, you can rinse them one more time, drain them completely, and store them in a bowl in the fridge covered with plastic wrap or some other airtight container.

Once your sprouts are the size you want, many of them are then (if not before) exposed to light to allow them to get green (adding chlorophyll to the impressive list of nutrients they provide.) You may be able to do this with ambient light, or you might want/need to put them in a window which receives indirect light from outdoors.

As mentioned earlier, you want to avoid direct hot sun. However, we've done well greening sprouts in a window even on snowy or rainy days, so it doesn't take much light to do the trick. When they are done to your satisfaction, rinse and drain them (removing the leftover seed hulls, if you like), and store them in the refrigerator as described above. Once you learn to plan the amounts and timing of your batches of sprouts, you'll probably nearly always eat your sprouts before they are past their prime. Besides the normal uses in sandwiches and salads, sprouts make wonderful snacks and can also be added to a variety of other dishes, including Mexican food, omelettes, baked goods, and more. If you don't eat them all right away, you can expect them to last well in the refrigerator for about a week.

As you can see, the process is very simple. After several months of sprouting, including seven different varieties of sprouts, we have had only one crop failure. It happened after we'd been successfully sprouting for some time, and it seemed to be caused by a combination of issues, including a change in temperature and humidity in our home, slightly warmer than usual rinse water, and a decrease in air circulation. We also sprouted one variety of seeds which we did not particularly like, but I have given those to a family member to try so that they will not go to waste.

I hope that some of you will try sprouting with your families, and that if you do, you will enjoy it as much as we have.

For more more specific information on sprouting supplies, techniques, recipes, frequently asked questions, and fun facts and ideas for kids, I highly recommend you visit the Sproutpeople website at: <http://www.sproutpeople.com> It provides both for the most complete and accessible information I've seen anywhere and an amazing variety of products. I, and others in my family, have done business with them on multiple occasions and always been pleased by both their fine quality products and fast efficient, and friendly service.



About Sara L. Ambarian

Sara L. Ambarian is a wife, homeschooling mother, custom wedding gown and accessory designer, author and illustrator. She is one multi-talented lady. **Visit** <http://www.condortales.com/bridestouch.html> [ymbios/wedding.html](http://www.ymbios.com/wedding.html) today for additional information.

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End of Part 1



