

Leaf Lookers

A Tour for Preschoolers



Teacher Packet





“Walking the Line”



“Scratch and Sniff” Plants



“A Crayola Fall”



“Big, Bigger, Biggest”

Overview

The goal of this lesson is to demonstrate the importance and variety of leaves. Using two of our main conservatories (arid and tropical) as well as our teaching greenhouse as a classroom, students will explore an assortment of leaf colors, shapes, sizes and patterns. Activities will build proficiency in color recognition, counting, sorting, left/right distinction, size differentiation, comparison, measurement, and vocabulary development as well as gross and fine motor skills. In addition, students will be introduced to the concept of photosynthesis.

Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park is ADA compliant.

Major Concepts

- Leaves make food for plants (photosynthesis)
- Leaves help a plant live (adaptive strategies).
- Some leaves change color (seasons, deciduous trees).
- Leaves come in many shapes, sizes, colors.
- Leaves have many different textures, patterns and smells.

Benchmarks

(using the *Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood, 3rd edition*)

Cognitive Development

To acquire learning and problem-solving skills

Demonstrate an interest in exploring

Observe and make discoveries

To expand logical thinking skills

Classify objects by similarities and differences

Arrange objects in a series

To acquire concepts and information leading to a fuller understanding of the immediate world

Use words to describe the characteristics of objects (colors...)

To demonstrate skills in make-believe play

Assume a pretend role

To expand verbal communication skills

Recall words in a song

Follow simple directions

Physical Development

To enhance gross motor skills

Use large muscles for balance

To enhance and refine fine motor skills

Use small muscles to complete tasks

To use all senses in learning

Demonstrate visual discrimination skills

Discriminate differences in texture, smell

Socio-Emotional Development

To demonstrate cooperative, pro-social behavior

Work cooperatively with others on completing a task

Activities

Walking the Line

Children are shown several large, laminated illustrations of various leaf shapes. Each child selects one, and traces the outline with his/her finger. Then, the children are encouraged to stand on the drawing, and pretend they are tight-rope walkers. Either flat-footed, or on tip-toe, they are urged to try to walk along the outline of the leaf without falling off. They are given a pre-determined time to do the exercise. When the bell rings, they all find another leaf, and try to tight-rope its outline. At the end of the exercise, they are asked if all leaf shapes are the same? Which shapes seemed harder to walk? Why?

A Crayola Fall

Children will learn a song about autumn. A basket of artificial leaves will be spilled onto the floor at the conclusion of the song. Using appropriately-sized rakes, the children will rake leaves into a large pile. They will identify the different colors of the leaves, and count how many leaves of each color there are.

Big, Bigger, Biggest

- a. Children will explore different ways of measuring a seven-foot leaf template.
- b. Taking a half-inch leaf as one extreme and the seven-foot leaf as the other extreme, children working in pairs or teams, are encouraged to compare various leaves and to correctly place them on a scale according to size.

“Scratch and Sniff” Plants

- a. Using their senses of sight, touch and smell children will explore the patterns, textures and scent of a variety of real plants.
- b. Children will discuss the important role that leaves play in providing food for the plant.

In between these exercises, the students will walk through the conservatories, observe actual plants, and learn ways leaves help plants survive.

Classroom Activities

- a. After the tour, start a **class leaf collection**. Begin with trees near the school. Then, ask children to bring in leaves from trees near their homes. Instead of focusing on identification, group leaves by size or shape. Create cardboard templates for the various leaves. Let the children color the leaves as they appear in the spring. In the fall, let children color another cardboard template for the same leaves, this time focusing on their autumn colors. Compare the change in color.
- b. **Grow a class plant**. Note the growth patterns. What grows first? Second? Are there more flowers or leaves? Why are there are so leaves?