

Dish Gardens (For Younger Children)

Supplies: old newspapers; shallow plastic tubs (one for each child); shallow dishes (at least two); flower seeds or small flower plants such as marigold; pea gravel; sand; soil; stickers and/or markers; and water.

Prepare: Cover the table with old newspapers. Clean the old sponges by running them through a dishwasher without detergent. Cut the sponges into small pieces.

Give each child a plastic tub. (You can reuse clean, empty butter tubs.) Encourage the children to decorate the tubs with stickers and markers.

Help each child spread gravel on the bottom of the butter dish.

Have the children put a layer of sand on top of the gravel.

Then instruct the children to put a layer of soil on top of the sand.

Say: God created the rocks, sand, and soil we are using in our dish gardens.

Ask: God created soils in different colors. They can be black, red, yellow, white, brown, and gray. What color soil are we using in our dish gardens?

Show the children how to plant flower seeds or plants in the soil.

Say: God also created the seeds and plants we are using in our gardens. When we grow plants, we are helping the soil. The plants hold the soil down and keep it from eroding. Eroding means that the soil is washing or blowing away from the earth.

Lightly water the dish garden. The seeds will sprout in a few days.

Say: Psalm 8:6, CEV says: "You let us rule everything your hands have made." The person who wrote the psalm is talking to God. God wants us to rule over the earth. A good ruler, like a good king or queen, takes care of everyone and everything in his or her kingdom. When we grow plants we are being good rulers; we are taking care of the earth. We call a good ruler over the earth a good steward.

Make a Terrarium (For Elementary Children)

Supplies: 2 two-liter bottles per child, craft knife, pebbles, sand, potting soil, charcoal briquettes (not quick lighting), small brown paper bags, hammer, mosses, ferns, ivies, and water.

Prepare: (Adults only) Cut all the two-liter bottles in half with a craft knife.

Give each child 2 two-liter bottle bottoms. Have each child place pebbles in one of the bottoms. Add a layer of sand on top of the pebbles.

Give each child a paper bag with a charcoal briquette in it. Let the child use a hammer to smash the briquette inside the bag. Pour the crushed briquettes on top of the sand. Put a layer of soil on top of the briquettes.

Ask: God created soils in different colors. They can be black, red, yellow, white, brown, and gray. What color soil are we using in our terrariums?

Say: It is important for us to keep soil clean and healthy. I wonder what we can do to keep soil clean and healthy.

Plant small plants such as ivies, mosses, and ferns.

Say: One thing we can do to help soil be clean and healthy is to grow plants. Plants hold the soil down and keep it from eroding. Eroding means that the soil is washing or blowing away.

Water the plants lightly. Place the other bottle bottom on top to close the terrarium.

Say: Our Bible verse is from the book of Psalms. The person who wrote the psalm is talking to God and saying, "You let us rule everything your hands have made" (Psalm 8:6, CEV). God wants us to rule over the earth. A good ruler, like a good king or queen, takes care of everyone and everything in his or her kingdom. When we grow plants we are being good rulers; we are taking care of the earth. We call a good ruler over the earth a good steward.

Tree Prints (For All Ages)

Supplies: old newspapers; smocks; shallow pans; sponges; tempera paint; previously used paper; tree leaves, twigs.

Prepare: Cover the table with old newspapers. Place a sponge in the shallow tray. Pour a small amount of paint on the sponge. Spread the paint out.

Have the children wear smocks to protect their clothing.

Give each child a piece of paper that has already been printed on one side. Show the children the printed side.

Say: Today we will be using paper we have already used before. This side is printed, but if we turn it over there is a blank side we can use for painting. We are recycling our paper. That means we are using it again.

Have the children turn their paper to the blank side. Show the children the natural items you have provided. Show the children how to make nature prints by pressing an item gently into the paint, then pressing the object onto the paper.

Say: God created all these things to grow on trees. Trees help people live on the earth. Trees clean the air we breathe and help keep us cool. They provide food for us and for animals. They also provide homes for many different kinds of wildlife.

Ask: What can we do to help trees? (Plant more trees.)

Say: Isn't it amazing how God planned for trees? When we plant trees and take care of trees we are being good rulers; we are taking care of the earth. We call a good ruler over the earth a good steward. Being a good steward means that we are taking responsibility to care for the earth.