Seed Tapes

Goals
Students will learn the importance of spacing seeds and an easy method for making sure they are appropriately spaced.

Objectives
Students will make seed tapes with properly spaced seeds.

Materials
- Newspaper
- Flour
- Water
- Seeds (carrot, lettuce and onion seeds work well)

Time: 35-40 minutes

Background Information
It is important that seeds are properly spaced to assure that the mature plants have enough room to grow, without overcrowding. Did you know that each beet seed is actually a dried up fruit made up of 1 to 6 seeds? Therefore, thinning is essential for beets to grow properly. The guide below may be helpful for this activity:

Seed Spacing Guide

- Beets 3”
- Carrots 3”
- Chard 3”
- Lettuce 3”
- Peas 1”
- Radishes 1”
- Spinach 6”
- Onions 1”

Introduction (5 min)
Discuss the importance of properly spacing seeds when planting. If we plant too many seeds together, the roots will not have enough space to grow into a strong, large healthy plant. This is especially important for root vegetables like carrots and beets, which need good root space to grow properly.

Share with students that making seed tapes saves time and effort when we plant our garden and seed tapes create straight, perfectly spaced rows.

Activity Steps (25 min)
1. Tear newspaper from top to bottom into 1-inch-wide strips. Avoid pages with color because they tend to have some chemicals that might not be healthy for your garden.
2. Make a paste by mixing water with ½ cup flour until it is the consistency of thick gravy.
3. Lay the strips on a table and measure out recommended spacing distances as you go. You can also pre-measure the spacing and mark each strip of newspaper where a seed needs

to be. For students, think of easy ways to measure, such us the length of their thumb or find a rock that is the appropriate length.

4. Put a dollop of flour glue at each point and put a seed on top of the glue. You can use a teaspoon, cotton swap, or toothpick to dole out the paste. A toothpick works best for small seeds like carrots.
5. Let the glue dry, then roll up the strips and put them in a sealable plastic bag. Use a separate bag for each type of seed. You can add a tablespoon of powdered milk in a paper towel to the bag to keep seeds dry.
6. Label the bags or slide the corresponding seed packet into each bag so you can identify the tapes later. Store in a cool, dry place until planting time. You are able to plant the tapes once the glue is dry, but make sure not to keep them longer than a season.
7. Plant by laying tapes in rows with seed side facing up and covering with a fine soil to the recommended depth.

Conclusion (5 – 10 min)

Review how seeds germinate with the students. Have students make predictions about the seed tapes. They could write their predictions in paragraph form or draw pictures in their journals. Have students make predictions about what the plant and fruits may look like, their height and their leaf shapes, for example. These predictions could be referred to throughout the growing season.

Sources

Adapted from: *Jeff Cox's 100 Greatest Garden Ideas.*

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