

Magic Potions in the Garden

Spending time outdoors in nature has a positive influence on emotional and physical wellbeing for both children and adults. Explore your garden with your child to discover natural ingredients. Combine with imagination and let the magic begin!

Things you will need:

- Basket or bag for collecting ingredients
- Leaves and flowers collected from your garden and some water
- Chopping board or tray for your work surface
- Tools for processing – scissors, child safe knife, mortar and pestle
- Tools for transferring and combing – spoons, scoops, tweezers, tongs, funnels, chop sticks, strainers
- Containers of mixing and storing – bowls, jars, spray bottles, pump bottles

Tips and Considerations

- Be aware of hazards that may cause choking and ensure you supervise your child or children during this play, particularly to stop ingestion or insertion of small objects, to note for any unknown allergens they may come across or to monitor and guide the use of tools.
- Weave in some literacy. Perhaps your magic potion needs a warning label or a name?
- Remember these potions are not for drinking. Perhaps they may be sprinkled, poured or sprayed around the garden.

How to do it:

1. Encourage your child to collect some colourful and fragrant items from your garden, or perhaps overhanging offerings from your neighbours' gardens when you go out for a walk. Many leaves release a fragrant aroma, so suggest or demonstrate how you crush some gently in your hands and take a big sniff. Chat with your child about whether it is a scent they like, or perhaps it's something you or they dislike and therefore is perfect for a stinky repelling potion!
2. Now together start carefully chopping, pounding, mixing and pouring. Remember not to rush the process. This is a time to engage all the senses, to wonder, to talk and to listen. Picking and processing a magic potion's ingredients will help develop your child's eye hand coordination, and this supports future confidence in handwriting, as well as all sorts of everyday self-help skills like dressing, as the same small finger muscles are used.
3. The greater variety of tools you or your child can find to process the ingredients, the greater the opportunity there is to develop these fine motor skills, and to exercise the mind with experimentation and problem solving. Introduce these tools with confidence and care.
4. Chat together while you make your potion and develop a rich vocabulary of actions (pluck, pound, grind, shred, combine, strain, pour, transfer etc...) Perhaps you might learn the names of plants in your garden or the names of plant parts (petals, stamens, stems, veins, sepals, bark etc...)

Now for the magic!

Encourage your child to use their imagination and decide what the potion is for. Recall stories and fairy-tales with your child, what potions do they know about? What do they want *their* potion to do? This is another opportunity to extend vocabulary as well as further imagination. Will their potion attract, repel, soothe, heal, nourish, strengthen, weaken, empower, calm or energise?

Create a label together and encourage your child to write and draw on it. Include the name of your potions and perhaps description of the magic potion's powers, instructions for use or the ingredients within. This is where conversations about feelings, problem solving, and creativity can grow. An adult or older sibling might help with this part, or a child might do this themselves, giving their marks meanings of their own.

