

LETTER TO PARENTS

Cut here and paste on school letterhead before making copies.

SCIENCE NEWS

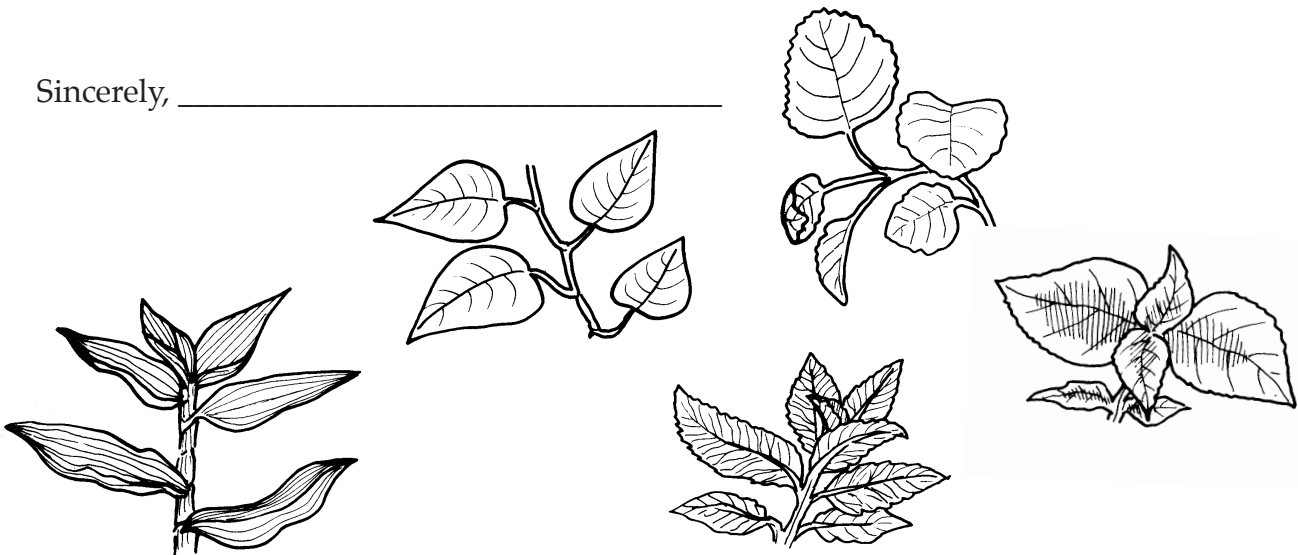
Dear Parents,

Our class is beginning a scientific study of plants and animals. We will be investigating several ways to propagate new plants, including growing plants from seed (wheat, rye grass, and alfalfa, a legume); bulbs (onions and garlic); stems (white potatoes and cuttings from various plants); and roots (carrots and radishes). The scientific thinking processes children will be using in their investigations include observing properties and structures of plants; communicating discoveries orally, in writing, and through drawing; comparing the development of plants over time; and organizing their findings in order to draw conclusions about how different plants reproduce. We will be making a terrarium and comparing the needs of plants and animals. We will be looking at features of different plants and animals and studying how those features help the plants and animals live in different environments. In addition, we will learn how animals use different teeth to bite, cut, and chew their food. I hope you will encourage your child to share his or her growing knowledge of plants and animals at home, and perhaps engage in a few plant-growing activities at home as well.

If your child has specific plant allergies, please let me know so I can plan accordingly.

We will root cuttings in a couple of weeks. If you have one or more plants that you could donate to the science program at that time, I would appreciate it. I could use Swedish ivy, English ivy, coleus, spearmint, or Wandering Jew plants. Thanks. We're looking forward to lots of fun and lots of learning as we explore a world full of plants and animals!

Sincerely, _____



Name _____ Date _____

HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION
INVESTIGATION 1: GRASS AND GRAIN SEEDS

Wheat, corn, barley, rice, and oats are grass plants that are staple sources of nutrition for cultures around the world. The abundant seeds of those plants are the group of foods we call grains. You may have examples of grains in your kitchen, perhaps as whole grains of rice or a tortilla made from flour. Here are some places where another grain, corn, might be found in your kitchen.

tortillas frozen corn	cereal canned corn	bread popcorn	flour grits	muffins cornstarch
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Have your child look for examples of grains in your home. He or she can list the examples or bring in a small labeled sample for a class display.

Wheat		Corn		
Rice	Oats		Barley	

Name _____ Date _____

HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION
INVESTIGATION 2: STEMS

In class, we are observing how stems grow and sprout. There are many plant stems that we enjoy at our table and see in the market.

Next time you go shopping with your child, please take this checklist and a pencil with you. Ask your child to check off any of the following stems that he or she can find. If you find others, write them down.

- asparagus
- brussels sprouts on a stem
- white potato
- red potato
- broccoli
- parsley
- celery
- artichoke (with stem)

HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION

INVESTIGATION 3: TERRARIUMS

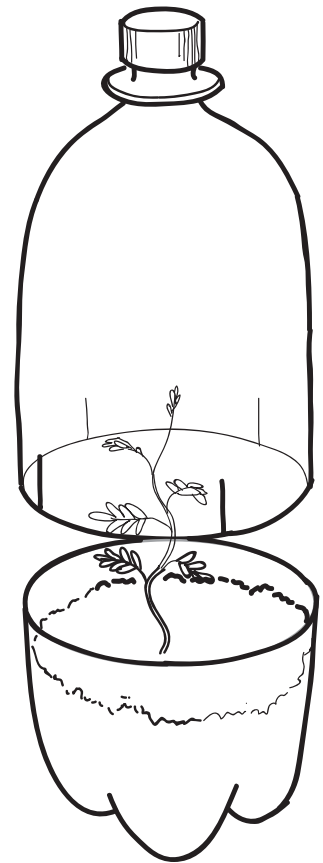
In class, we have been growing new plants from seeds and from the stems of some plants. By making a simple, low-maintenance terrarium at home, your child can continue to make plant observations. You could plant the terrarium with rooted stem cuttings, seeds, potatoes (a modified underground stem), or yard transplants. Everything the plants need to live is placed inside the terrarium before it is sealed: water, soil, and air. Placed in a well-lit area, out of the sun, the terrarium plants will live untended for a long time.

MATERIALS

- 1 2-liter plastic bottle
- Soil
- Stem cuttings with roots, seeds, or small plants
- Scissors
- Gravel or pebbles

DIRECTIONS

1. Remove the label from a 2-liter soda bottle. Have an adult cut the bottle about 4 inches (10 cm) from the bottom. Leave the cap on.
2. Cut four 1-inch (2.5-cm) slits along the bottom edge of the top part of the bottle.
3. Put a layer of gravel or small pebbles in the plastic base. Add a layer of soil. If you are planting seeds in the terrarium, fill the soil to near the top edge and plant your seeds.
4. Gently place your rooted cutting in the soil and fill more soil in around it.
5. Water the soil. Place the top section of your bottle on the bottom, fitting the slits over the base.
6. Place the terrarium in a well-lit area. Your terrarium plants have everything they need to live and grow.



HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION

INVESTIGATION 4: BULBS AND ROOTS

Read the following story with your child. Then have him or her write an ending to the story, or dictate an ending for you to write.

Once upon a time there lived a poor family who worked hard every day. Papa would go to town and look for jobs. Peter would go to the nearby farms to milk cows, and his mother would mend clothes. Everyone worked hard to put food on the table for the evening meal. Everyone, that is, except Henry. Henry was too young to help Papa with his jobs, too afraid of cows to help his brother, and didn't know how to mend clothes.

One day Henry was sitting by the road to town when a farmer passed on his way to market. "Hello, Henry," called the farmer. "What are you doing sitting alone by the road?"

"Oh, hello," mumbled Henry. "I'm wishing I could help my family. Everyone works so hard so we can buy food for our supper. Everyone but me. I'm too young to help Papa, too afraid of cows to help my brother, and I don't know how to mend clothes with my mother. I'm afraid I'm rather useless."

"Now, Henry," replied the farmer, "no person is useless. We all have ways to help. Sometimes it is difficult to discover how." The farmer reached into his wagon and pulled out a small sack. He handed the sack to Henry and said, "Sometimes all we need is some help getting started and a little creativity. See what you can do with these to help your family. Good luck, Henry." The farmer continued on his way to market.

Henry looked into the sack. He saw a potato, a carrot, and a handful of seeds. "How will one potato, one carrot, and some seeds help me or my family?" Henry wondered. "It's not much of a meal." But as Henry sat and thought, and thought and sat, an idea began to form in his head. As the idea grew, so did his excitement. "I know what I'll do with these!" exclaimed Henry, as he jumped up and ran home.

What will Henry do?

How will it help his family?