

Indoor Gardening with Kitchen Waste

Grow a garden with an extra dose of environmental friendliness by using plant scraps that usually get thrown away. Full of dirty hands-on fun, this activity is a great way to teach your kids about the science behind plant growth.

Introduce the experiment by talking about the six basic parts of plants: roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruit, and seeds. Ask your child to think about some of the plant-based foods, including carrots and pineapples, that they eat regularly and guess what part of the plant each one is. Your child probably already knows that pineapples are fruit but do they know that carrots are actually roots?

First off, a word of caution; when we say you can grow carrots from carrots, we mean the plant, not the root vegetable. The orange, kid-friendly vegetable is actually a taproot, and once removed from the plant, it can't regrow. Make sure you explain this to your kids before your project begins. Otherwise, if someone thinks they're growing real carrots from carrot tops, they're likely to be disappointed. Instead, they'll grow a new stock of bright, fresh greens with a lovely herbaceous flavour. You can use the greens to make a pesto to serve with pasta, or grilled meat; you can add them to salads; or you can use them as a garnish. If you continue to let the greens grow, they will even produce lovely white flowers.

What You Need:

2–3 carrot tops, cut about 1" from the top

Shallow bowl

Pebbles (optional)

Sand

Water

1 fresh pineapple

Pot of damp soil



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What You Do:

1. Start with the carrot top plants. Ask your child to fill the shallow bowl about 1/2" deep with sand. Invite them to decorate the edges of the sand with pebbles.
2. Have your child carefully trim off any leaves from the carrot top so they're no longer than 1/2".
3. Get your child to push the carrot tops into the sand so the bottoms are close to the bottom of the bowl.
4. Ask them to fill the bowl with lukewarm water to the level of the top of the sand.
5. Leave the bowl in a sunny area. Have your child water the carrot top plants every day to make sure they don't dry out.
6. Leaves should start sprouting within a week. After a few weeks, the plants should be quite tall!
7. Now make the pineapple plant. Have your child cut the top off the fresh pineapple, trim off any flesh, and strip off any lower leaves. They should be left with about 1 inch of exposed stalk. Let the stalk and leaves dry for a week.
8. Ask your child to put the stalk in a glass of water. Make sure none of the leaves are touching the water.
9. Place the plant in a spot that doesn't vary too much in temperature. Encourage them to check on its progress periodically and change its water every two days.
10. After a few days, you should see roots growing from the bottom of the pineapple.
11. Once they see roots, invite them to plant the pineapple plant in the pot of soil. Make sure the pot is large enough to accommodate the roots and gives them enough room to expand.
12. Keep the plant in a warm, sunny place. Encourage your child to water it once a week. Have your child brainstorm other parts of plants that would normally get thrown away that could be replanted. Root vegetables such as turnips, parsnips, and beets work well.

