



RECOMMENDED AGES: 4+ * OUTSIDE * ANY SEASON

Rainbow Chips

DESCRIPTION In this activity, children use paint chips to search the garden for corresponding colors. This is a great way to introduce children to the garden and prompt a close look at the diversity of color.

BACKGROUND The garden is teeming with color! Often we think of finding color only in flowers, but if we look closely at each plant, rock, and handful of soil, we can find every color of the rainbow. This activity is an excellent way to introduce young children to a garden and you can repeat it throughout the year as the seasons change. You can even talk about shades and tones of color. For example, there isn't just one green, there are many shades and tones of green. Pushing children's awareness of color in the garden helps them discover things they might otherwise overlook.

MATERIALS

- * Variety of paint chip samples from a local paint or hardware store, cut up into individual color squares
- * A bag or container in which to conceal the paint chips
- * Tempera paints



ACTIVITY Start by telling this imaginary story (embellished as you like!) in a mysterious tone of voice:

“One day I was walking through the garden, when it started to rain really hard. Soon enough, I was in the middle of a huge storm. With each step I took, I became more and more soaked. I continued to walk through the dark and wet garden, until I came to an open meadow. Above the meadow the sun started to peek out through the heavy clouds, and the rain settled down to a mist. Then, a huge double rainbow appeared over the hills in the distance. The colors were so vivid and bright. There were shades of red, orange, yellow, green, lime, peach, pink, purple, maroon, blue, turquoise, and cobalt. There were even colors in that rainbow that I hadn't seen before...colors without names. All of a sudden, the rainbow just shattered in the sky, and all the pieces fell to earth. I ran over to the pieces and began picking them up and putting them all in a bag. Would you all like to see the rainbow chips?”

Now have the students find a partner. If possible, assign an adult chaperone or older child to each group. Give each group a “rainbow chip” from your pouch and instruct the children to look for the exact color somewhere in the garden. Encourage them to look very closely at grains of soil, stripes in a tree’s bark, and other places they might otherwise overlook and to try to find matches in the natural parts of the garden, rather than on signs or buildings. Show children how to hold the paint chip just behind the object to determine if they have a good match. Demonstrate how something red that they find could be a very different red from the color on the chip. *Does this match? How about this?* Then send students out with one color chip to look for their own good match. You may choose to have them show other students, or adults, their match in the place where they found it. Alternatively, you may ask students to bring their items back to the circle to share with the group. Either way, once they have found a good match, students can return the chip to your bag and select a new one. Repeat the activity four or five times per team.

TYING IT TOGETHER

Each time you do this activity, record the date and post all the colors the children found. Then ask, *What colors did you see most often in the garden? Is this different from the last time we did this activity?* The children may see more green in the spring and summer, but possibly reds, yellows, and browns in the fall and winter.

Is there a place in your garden where the children might find concentrations of bright colors? How about dark colors? See if they can point out those spots.

Ask, *Is there a place in the garden where you think there isn’t any color at all?* Go with the children to this place and help them find colors!

DIGGING DEEPER

Set up the paints and paper. Put out one basic paint color — red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, brown — and one tint — black or white. Let the children finger paint with those two paints on a piece of paper to explore the spectrum of that basic color. When the paintings are dry, you can repeat the activity with these homemade paint chips!