

Seed Catalog Fun

Overview: Whether it is a cold winter day or a rainy afternoon, seed catalogs can provide hours of fun when the outdoor garden is unavailable. They're informative, entertaining, and a potential source of games and crafts.

Materials:

- assorted seed catalogs
- scissors
- a variety of craft supplies

Approximate Time to Complete: 30 minutes to hours

Location: Indoor

Ages: All Ages

Season: Any season (although most catalogs are mailed out at the beginning of the calendar year so make sure to save them when they come)

Instructions

1. **Gather a variety of seed catalogs.** If you have ever ordered seeds by mail, you are most likely already receiving a wide selection of catalogs. If you haven't ordered seeds via the mail before, go online and request a few. Most will be sent to you free or at a minimal cost. You may also want to contact gardening friends and neighbors. Most have more than they can ever use and would be happy to donate them to you after they have made their annual wish lists and placed their orders for the coming garden season.

2. With scissors in hand, **let your creativity run wild.** Seed catalogs are filled with photos of vigorous plants, beautiful flowers and shiny, ripe fruits and vegetables. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

Plan Your Garden

Use seed catalogs to plan your garden for the next growing season. The first step in the planning process is to take an inventory of the seeds you have left from last year. Vegetable and flower seeds saved in a dry, sealed container in a cool, dark room can last for several years. The germination percentage of new seeds is marked on the packet. Often it exceeds 90 percent. In general, most seeds still have acceptable germination levels for three years. Some vegetables and herbs, such as leeks and parsley, are good only for one year.

If you're not sure how viable your saved seeds are, try a germination test. Here's how: Place 10-25 seeds in a moist paper towel on a dish. Place the dish in a warm spot out of direct sunlight, and keep the paper towel moist. After 10 days, check to see how many seeds have germinated. If less than 70 percent of the seeds have germinated, then it may be time to buy new



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seeds. If the germination percentage is 70-90 percent, then sow the seeds thicker than suggested on the packet to compensate for those seeds that won't sprout.

Once you've finished your inventory, make a list of the packets you want to replace. Have your kids price-shop from various catalogs to find the best deals. Talk about the advantages and disadvantages of organic, treated, and untreated seeds. Look at buying some new varieties or types of plants to try in the garden. Read the descriptions and days to maturity carefully to be sure the annual vegetables and flowers selected will grow and mature in your climate

Make Plant Labels

After selecting your seed, make sure to keep the photos of the ones you ordered to make plant labels for your garden. You can glue them to index cards and then laminate them for the season (make sure to leave a border of laminating material around the edges to keep water from getting in).

Decorate with Collages

A collage is a collection of materials (in this case plant photos) glued onto a surface. You can use regular glue, glue sticks or decoupage glue (specifically made for crafts and can be used as an adhesive and also applied on top of a composition to serve as a sealant). You can make place mats (perhaps highlight a rainbow of fruits and vegetables to inspire healthy eating), greeting cards, bookmarks, an [art box](#), and more.

Make a Model

Using old boxes of different sizes, use the catalogs photos to make a 3-D model of your future garden. This may help make planning more fun and engaging for young children especially.

Create a Card Game

Younger kids can sort the cards by color or plant type. You could also create a memory-based matching games or assign different values to flowers and vegetables, such as a tomato is equal to an ace or a zinnia is equal to a deuce to create your own garden-inspired playing cards.

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