

Activity 10:

Growing Clean Air Neck Pet



Objective: Germinate seeds in unconventional containers to better understand plant needs and to understand the benefit that plants provide



Time: 35 minutes



Materials: Plastic film canisters (with lids that have a flat surface), soil, yarn, scissors, ryegrass seed, soil, single-hole puncher, water, *Growing Clean Air Neck Pet Observation* page



NOTE: For younger students, prepare canisters by punching holes around sides and top as shown below.

“We will be breathing a little easier with all that extra oxygen.”

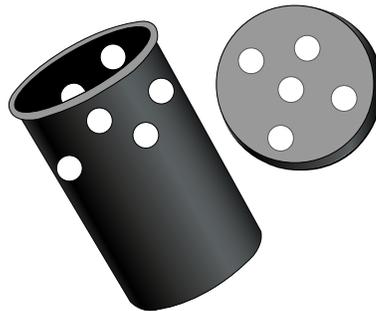
Quote from *Plantzilla*, by Jerdine Nolen

Mortimer enjoyed his green pet over the summer months. Even though it was wild and quite unusual, he loved having it around all the time. Tell your students that they will have a chance to keep a green and quite unusual pet “hanging” around all the time as well!

Before beginning, ask the students to think about what plants need. Review that plants need P.L.A.N.T.S. (see Activity 1). Tell the students that they will create living, growing *necklaces*. Even though they typically don’t see plants growing

around people’s necks, these “hairy” green Neck Pets will thrive as long as the plant’s needs are met.

Show the students a closed film canister. Ask if they believe all a plant’s needs could be met in this canister. Now use a hole puncher and punch several holes around the sides and lid as shown below. Fill the canister half full of soil, and recap it.

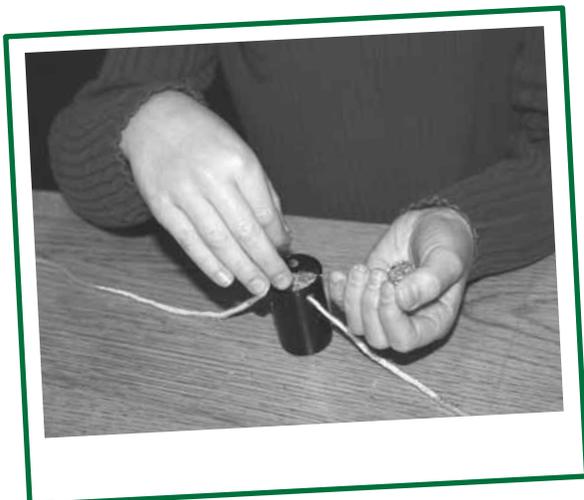


Ask the same question again. Point out that the only limitation of this container is that the plant itself must be a small one and not require a lot of space.



Guide the students through the process of making their own Neck Pets:

1. Use a single-hole puncher and punch holes all around the top half of the canister and in the lid. Make sure the circles are not touching each other.
2. Cut a 30-inch length of yarn and insert it through the holes at right above the middle of the canister.
3. Fill the canister half full of soil.
4. Add a thin layer of grass seed and another thin layer of soil.



5. Carefully pour in just enough water to wet the soil, and add a little bit more each day to make sure the soil is moist but not soggy.

Although this is an unusual container, if the soil is kept moist the plant will have its immediate needs met and will continue to grow. The students can begin wearing their necklaces as soon as the tiny seedlings begin to poke through the soil. Over the next several days, the neck pets will grow surprisingly thick and long. Allow students to trim their Neck Pets by clipping the ends of the straggly “hairs” as needed.

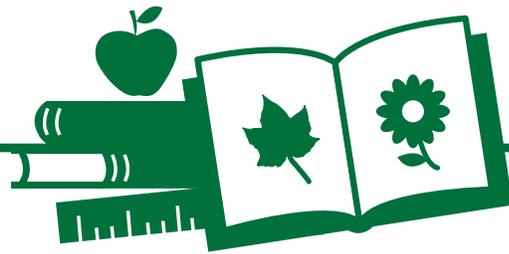


Point out that besides being a fun, novel and attractive necklace, neck pets also serve a purpose! Ask the students to think about plants and the benefits they offer. In addition to the plants all over the globe that provide food, clothing, shelter, fuel, medicines and beauty, plants also

provide the world with clean, pure oxygen. While they are wearing their Neck Pets, those small plants are generating small amounts of oxygen right below the students' mouths and noses!

Your young gardeners will enjoy and be proud of their unusual necklace, which will be sure to generate lots of interest from parents, other teachers and friends. Tell the students that it is their job as Junior Master Gardeners to take that opportunity to tell others about their Neck Pets' plant needs and how plants clean the air!

As an extension, encourage the students to experiment by growing another necklace using different seeds, combinations of seeds or by adapting different containers (egg crates, plastic eggs, etc.), trying different growing media, or allowing the plants to grow in warmer or brighter conditions. Challenge them to try and grow a bigger, *more monstrous* Neck Pet!



○ **In the Classroom**

○ As the students are waiting for their necklaces to spring to life, expand on the last line of the *Growing Clean Air Neck Pet Observation* page. There, the students will draw a picture of themselves wearing the necklace as it begins to grow wild!

○ Have the students write the day-by-day happenings in letter form, as Mortimer did when he wrote letters to his teacher. Ask them to address their letters to you. Guide the students to make at least five entries.

○ Conclude by having the students share their wild accounts with the rest of the group.