

# Garden Scavenger Hunt

**Math Big Idea:** The last counting word said names the total quantity of the entire set—the cardinal principle.

## In this activity, children:

- Count (or subitize) dots on a die
- Match things found in the garden to counting words with one-to-one correspondence
- Count out things found in the garden to a given number

## Materials

- Garden scavenger hunt picture cards
- Large die with dots (see note in margin)

## 1. Introduce Activity

Tell children that they are going to hunt in the garden to find real examples of things shown on the picture cards. Review the picture cards to make sure the children can identify and name what is depicted.

They will take turns rolling a die to get a number. Explain that this number will tell them the number of things to find in the garden.

## 2. Garden Hunt

Select one picture card as a category of things to find in the garden (e.g., leaves, vegetables, garden tools). Ask one child to roll the die and count or subitize the number of dots. Use this number as the target number for the scavenger hunt.

Send children off to hunt for the target number of things shown on the picture card such as 3 flowers, for example. Ask them to return to your gathering spot when they have completed their hunt.

Switch cards, roll the die, and repeat the game as time and interest allow. You may want to give pairs of children different pictures cards to hunt for several things simultaneously, but have everyone count out to the same target number.

## 3. Wrap-Up

Ask children what they found easily and what was harder to find and count. Discuss why this may be the case. Also, you may want to investigate examples from your garden that look different than the picture cards.

### Planning Tip

Introduce this activity to **small groups**. Once children are familiar with the activity, you may want to change the picture cards based on seasons or what's growing in your garden.

### Instructional Decision

*What kind of die should you use?*

Making your own dice is a good way to match the level of challenge to children's needs. For this activity, consider starting with a die labeled with 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, and 4 dots. Modify the number of dots as needed over time and with different groups of children.

### Math Note

The *cardinal principle* is reinforced for children when the last counting word is restated as an attribute of the set. For example, in this activity, you might say, *1, 2, 3...3 flowers*.

*Counting out* a set of a given number is more challenging for young children than simply counting a given set of objects. This is because they must keep track of the given number while they are counting out the set.

### Observation

*Do children instantly recognize the number of dots on the die (subitize)?*

*Can children count to a given number and stop, or do they keep going?*