The Lovely Leaf Season

'Tis the season to study leaves and all of their lovely autumn colors. Your youngsters are sure to fall for the pile of language, literature, math, and art activities included in this multidisciplinary unit. So what are you waiting for? Jump in!

Ideas by Lucia Kemp Henry

Let's Go on a Leaf Hunt

Discussing leaf attributes

Fall days are perfect for brisk walks outdoors with your youngsters. Plan to take your students for a walk on your school grounds, around your school's neighborhood, or to a local park. During the walk, encourage youngsters to collect freshly fallen leaves of different colors and shapes. (Newly fallen leaves have moisture in them and are more suitable for pressing and preserving.) As youngsters collect the leaves, talk about the different attributes—the colors, the shapes, and the sizes—of the leaves. Collect the gathered leaves in a large shopping bag.

When the children are ready for a break, have them lie down on the grass under a tree that is in the process of losing its leaves. Ask your students to watch the leaves falling from the tree. If the wind is blowing, have them close their eyes and listen to the leaves moving in the wind. On your walk back to school, play an autumn version of I Spy. Ask youngsters to look for trees that are mostly green, red, yellow, brown—even purple! It looks and sounds like autumn has arrived!

Pressing Leaves

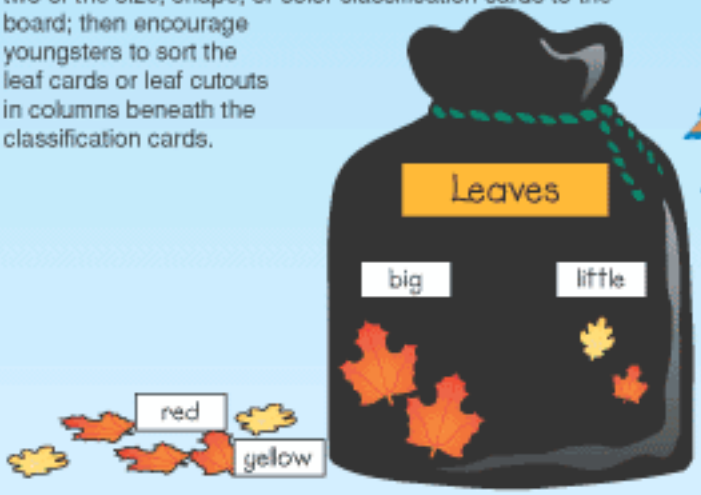
Preparing manipulatives for skill review

When you return from your leaf hunt, have your youngsters help you press the collected leaves to prepare them for use in classification activities, counting activities, and art projects. To press the leaves, you will need a supply of newspaper, some heavy books, and several large pieces of cardboard. Place several sheets of newspaper on a piece of cardboard. Arrange a single layer of leaves on the paper; then top with several more sheets of newspaper and another piece of cardboard. Continue layering cardboard, paper, and leaves in this manner until you have prepared the desired number of leaves for pressing. Evenly stack the books on top of the last piece of cardboard. Leave the materials undisturbed for about ten days. Then carefully remove some of the leaves from the layers. Prepare the removed leaves for counting and classification activities by gluing each leaf onto a white, poster board square. Laminate the poster board squares. Leave the remainder of the pressed leaves under the paper to be used for art activities at a later time.

Seasonal Sorting

Sorting leaves by attributes

Learning about size, shape, and color is bushels of fun when your learning tools are lovely leaves. For this seasonal sorting activity, use the leaves prepared in "Pressing Leaves" on page 4 or prepare the leaf shapes on page 11 for use by laminating the page and cutting out the leaves. Create a classification board by cutting a sheet of black poster board to resemble the shape of a plastic garbage bag. Attach a yarn tie if desired. Label a colored card "Leaves" and attach it near the top of the board. Similarly label additional cards with words that focus on the attributes of size, shape, and color. To the back of each card, attach the loop side of a piece of self-adhesive Velcro®. Attach the hook side of two pieces of self-adhesive Velcro® near the top of the board. To begin the sorting activity, attach two of the size, shape, or color classification cards to the board; then encourage youngsters to sort the leaf cards or leaf cutouts in columns beneath the classification cards.



A Lovely Leaf Song

Reinforcing science concepts through song

Reinforce youngsters' abilities to classify autumn leaves by singing this song to the tune of "London Bridge." Each time the song is repeated, ask a volunteer to suggest a new size, shape, or color word. For visual appeal, have the volunteer also display a leaf shape from page 11 that corresponds to his chosen word.

See the [red] leaf falling down,
Falling down, falling down.
See the [red] leaf falling down
To the ground.

Big Book of Leaves

Using adjectives in descriptive dictation

Following your leaf sorting activities, inspire your little ones to collaborate on the creation of a class big book. Stock a painting easel with red and yellow paint. Provide each child with a personalized sheet of art paper and ask him to paint either a big or small leaf using one of the provided colors. When the paintings are dry, bind them between construction paper covers. Title the book and decorate the front cover appropriately. Ask each child to describe his painted leaf using the color, shape, and size words learned in "Seasonal Sorting." On his paper, write the child's descriptive words to complete a sentence similar to the one shown. Provide each child an opportunity to share his page with the class; then read the book together as a group.