



SPRING| Sun Following the Sun: Shadows + Shade

Summary:

When you plan your garden in springtime, an important thing to pay attention to is the amount of sun each plant will need. Today, we will assess what our plants need and spend a little time discovering where in the garden they will be happiest. (Please note: You can find shadows at any time during a sunny day but some of these activities might work best in the mid to late afternoon when shadows lengthen!)

Before Visiting the Garden:

Gather: A few full seed packets you are interested in planting, white paper, crayons, and/or chalk

Explore: “Self-Portrait, Monument Valley, Utah, 1958” by Ansel Adams. What do you see? Do you think you could take a picture like this? How?

Read: *Shadow* by Suzy Lee. This book contains almost no words. Follow the heroine and see if you can imitate some of her shapes as she creates shadows in her attic.

In the Garden:

We might think all plants love as much sun as they can get but each plant, like a person, has different needs. Colorful flowers love sun but dark leafy greens, like kale, prefer a mix of sun and shade. One way that we can tell which plants love sun versus which ones need a little shade is by looking at their leaves. Plants that like shade often have wider, thinner leaves (so they can absorb more sunlight) while sun-loving plants have smaller, thicker leaves.

Questions to Explore:

- Which direction is the sun coming from?
- What buildings or trees near our garden cast shade or shadows?
- Where is the sunniest spot in the garden?
- Is there anything already growing in the garden? What do you notice about its leaves?
- Do you create a shadow in the garden? Which direction is it pointing?

Activity:

1. Take your seed packets and look at the growing instructions. Can you sort your packets into sun loving versus shade loving plants? Some plants might like a mix of both.
2. Draw a map on your paper of where in the garden you want to plant your seeds, based on what you observed about sun and shade.
3. If there is a gardener on site, ask him or her what they have noticed about sun over the course of the day.
4. If there are any plants growing and casting a shadow, take another piece of paper and place it under the shadow. Can you trace the outline? If you are near a sidewalk, you could also make outlines using your chalk.

Beyond the Garden | Shadow Play

A blank wall, a dark room, a flashlight, and little hands can create a whole world of adventure. On a cool spring night when you still feel like cuddling indoors, plan a family theater night. Invite each family member to present a short play creating shadow characters in front of a flashlight. If you want to get really fancy, have your gardener create playbills and pop some popcorn.

Continue Exploring | Supporting Materials

Master Gardener maps—check out different growing zones and info about where to plant: <http://www.ahs.org/gardening-resources/gardening-maps>