Seed Starts in a Mini Planter

**Overview:** Use old newspapers to create mini planters and start seeds at home.

**Subject area:** Backyard Science

**Grade level:** K-5<sup>th</sup>

**Objectives:** Children will be able to take home a vegetable or herb seedling in a homemade mini planter created from old newspaper.

**Prep time:** 10 minutes to gather supplies and cut strips of newspaper.

**Lesson time:** 10-15 minutes

**Materials needed:**
- Tool for making pots:
  - Option A: PotMaker brand of planter press (link)
  - Option B: glass beverage bottle (link)
- Newspaper
- Potting soil
- Small spray bottle filled with tap water
- Seeds of various herbs and vegetables
- Scissors
- Popsicle sticks
- Permanent marker

**Space needed:** A flat, stable work surface

**Staff needed:** 1-2

**Preparation steps:**
1. Cut strips of newspaper (size will depend on which tool you use to make your pots)
2. Practice making a few pots ahead of time to familiarize yourself with the tool.

**Presentation steps:**
1. Show the children the strips of newspaper. Ask the children if they can imagine this newspaper strip transforming into a mini planter. Demonstrate making a mini planter.
2. Children will take turns using the mini planter. You may need to assist them.
3. Have children add potting soil to fill each planter to the surface. Then, very gently tap the soil down about ½ inch.
4. Have children choose 3-5 seeds and place on the surface of the soil. Sprinkle a little extra soil on top.
5. Using the spray bottle, moisten the soil surface with about 5 sprays of water per planter.

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6. Have children write the name of their vegetable or herb on the end of a Popsicle stick. Insert into planter as a label.

7. Place in a sunny location (on a windowsill, or outside if it’s warm) and keep the soil moist using the spray bottle. Don’t overwater—water should not be dripping out of the bottom.

Notes:
- Children are planting 3-5 seeds to ensure at least one will sprout. If more than one sprouts, you can pull out the extra sprouts.
- These planters can be placed directly in the ground as the plant gets bigger. The newspaper will decompose.
- Children can also decorate their Popsicle sticks.