

# What's in the leaf litter?

## Grow a Leaf Litter Garden

The forest floor is covered in dead leaves, known as leaf litter, that rot down to help make soil. Leaves from the plants in the bush are always falling and making new layers of leaf litter. This leaf litter builds up over time and catches seeds and helps the seeds germinate from the trees above.

You can grow a surprise garden by collecting leaf litter, keeping it warm and moist and seeing what grows.



### You will need:

- An ice cream container
- Plastic lunch wrap
- Plastic bags and rubber bands
- Soil
- Water



### What to do:

It is best to start this investigation during July or August

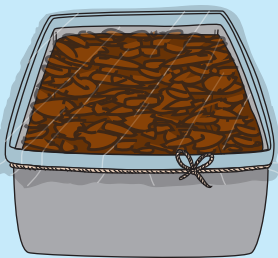
1. Collect leaf litter from under a few different trees. Put it into a plastic bag and close it with a rubber band so it doesn't dry out.



2. Make 4 or 5 holes in the bottom of the ice cream container. Half fill the container with soil.



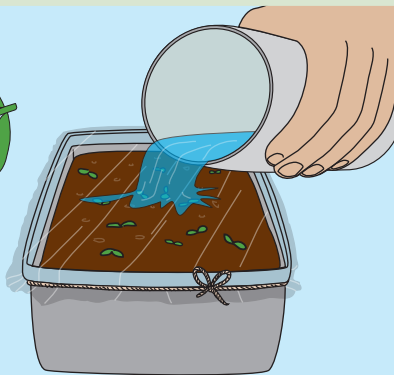
3. Fill the rest of the container with leaf litter leaving a 2cm gap at the top. Pack the leaf litter down firmly and add about 2 cups of water or enough to make the leaf litter and soil damp.



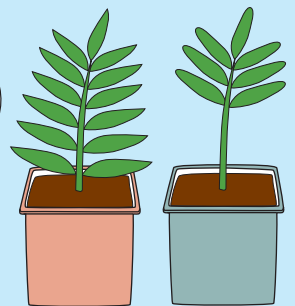
4. Cover the container with plastic lunch wrap and tie it around the top of the container with string or rubber bands.



5. Leave the container in a cool, shady spot. Your first seedling should appear in two to three weeks.



6. When you have a lot of seedlings starting to grow remove the plastic and give them more water.



7. When the seedlings are about 5 cm high you can put the strong, tall ones into yoghurt pots. Try to identify your plants, make sure they are not weeds!

You should be able to plant your seedlings in the garden the following winter.