

## Plant a Seed

*Parent Guide*, page 1 of 2

*Read the “Directions” sheets for step-by-step instructions.*

### SUMMARY

In this activity, children will place a seed in soil, care for it, and track the plant’s growth.

### WHY

By caring for a plant, children will contribute to Lady Bird Johnson’s mission of beautification. Children can also develop observation and measuring skills through tracking the plant’s growth.

### RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in 1st through 4th grade.

### TIME

- 15 minutes each day, over several days

### CHALLENGE WORDS

- **beautification:** to fight against ugliness and improve the looks of a place or thing
- **environment:** the conditions that surround someone or something; for people, this includes the weather, earth, plants, animals, and more
- **native species:** plants or animals that have always lived in a place
- **species:** a group of individual plants or animals that share common characteristics and a name

### GET READY

- Read *Miss Lady Bird’s Wildflowers* together. *Miss Lady Bird’s Wildflowers* is a biography of Claudia “Lady Bird” Johnson, wife of President Lyndon Baines Johnson. For tips on reading this book together, check out the [Guided Reading Activity](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/firstlady/firstlady_reading.pdf) ([http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/firstlady/firstlady\\_reading.pdf](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/firstlady/firstlady_reading.pdf)).
- Read the *Step Back in Time* sheets.

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/firstlady/>

## Plant a Seed

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### YOU NEED

- *Directions* sheets (*attached*)
- *ThinkAbout* sheet (*attached*)
- *Step Back in Time* sheets (*attached*)
- *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers* book (*optional*)
- Soil
- Seeds, preferably for a native species for your area
- Container, preferably recycled
- Water
- Ruler

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/firstlady/>



Smithsonian  
National Museum of American History  
Kenneth E. Behring Center

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## Plant a Seed

### Background Information, page 1 of 2

For more information, visit the National Museum of American History Web site <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/firstlady/>.

art of a woman's traditional role in America has been to care for her family and help the needy in her community. Similarly, a wife of a U.S. president (called "the first lady") often supports charities and other social causes. Recent first ladies have supported and brought attention to literacy, health care, prevention of drug abuse, volunteer work, and taking care of historic places. Their examples have encouraged women to take action at many levels, and have provided role models for women and girls.



Illustration of Lady Bird Johnson and her daughters in their garden.

Illustration from *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers*



Lady Bird Johnson in her inaugural gown, 1965. Courtesy of Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum

Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson, the wife of President Lyndon Baines Johnson, was first lady from 1963 to 1969. She took her job as first lady seriously. She carefully chose and announced the project she would work on while her husband was president. In a 1994 interview, she told the *Washington Post*, "Once you are [first lady] and you want to serve whatever your husband's efforts are on behalf of the country, you choose those which make your heart sing."

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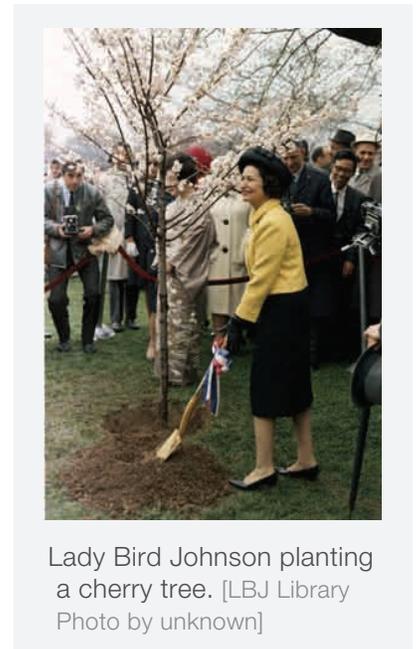
### *Background Information, page 2 of 2*

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Because Lady Bird Johnson loved nature and the environment, she turned her interest into projects to support her husband's efforts to improve living conditions for all Americans. She called it **beautification**. Lady Bird Johnson worked hard to get Congress to pass laws that protected the **environment**. She encouraged Americans to plant gardens and clean up neighborhoods and parks.

After leaving the White House, she continued to work on **beautification** and helped to start the National Wildflower Center, now called the *Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center* ([www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org)).

For more information on Lady Bird Johnson and other first ladies, visit the online exhibition *The First Ladies at the Smithsonian* (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/firstladies/>).



Lady Bird Johnson planting a cherry tree. [LBJ Library Photo by unknown]

**beautification:** to fight against ugliness and improve the looks of a place or thing

**environment:** the conditions that surround someone or something; for people, this includes the weather, earth, air, water, plants, animals, and more

Illustrations from *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers* used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

## Plant a Seed

*Directions*, page 1 of 3

*For adults and kids to follow together.*

1. Read through the *Step Back in Time* sheets or *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers*. What was one of Lady Bird Johnson's main projects as first lady?

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2. Lady Bird thought it was important to use plants that are **native species** for the place where you are gardening. Since **native species** have features that help them survive outside in your area, they can be easier and cheaper to take care of. Lady Bird also said that native plants "give us a sense of where we are in this great land of ours." Find out about one or more **native species** for your area.
  - Ask someone at your local gardening store or nature center about **native species** for your area.
  - Do a search at the *Wildflower Center's* recommended species list (<http://www.wildflower.org/collections/>).

**Tip**

Each plant's profile on the site includes a note about whether the plant is commercially available. This note can tell you whether you should expect to see seeds or seedlings of this plant at gardening stores.

3. Go on a hunt through your house for a container to use for your plant. Help protect the **environment** by recycling!
  - Find an old food container that is missing its lid.
  - Look for a mismatched bowl that you don't use much.
  - Do you have any empty plastic containers, like 1-liter soda bottles, that you could cut off the top and reuse as a container for planting?

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4. Find out if you can use soil in your yard for the plant species you've selected. Use the information on the seed packet or on the [Wildflower Center's plant profiles](#).

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5. Take a trip to your local gardening store to buy seeds for a **native species**. If you need to buy new soil for your plant, get some at the store.
  - Search the Internet to find out if there are any “seed grants” in your area. Seed grants will send seeds or gift certificates for seeds to plant in public places. For example, the [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#) offers seed grants for schools in Texas (<http://wildflower.org/wildflowers/>).
  - An organization called [WinterSown.org](#) will send free seeds to individuals who use their Web site to learn about a planting technique called “winter sowing” and correctly answer an online quiz.

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6. Be certain to plant the seeds at least one inch from the outside of the pot.  

**Tip** For more tips on planting, see the Wildflower Center's tips on container planting (<http://www.wildflower.org/howto/show.php?id=14>).

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7. Find out how much water and sunlight your plant needs. Check the plant's profile on the [Wildflower Center's Web site](#) or read the instructions on the seed packet.

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8. Each time you water the plant, take notes on the [ThinkAbout](#) sheet to track your plant's growth. Use a ruler to measure how tall it is, describe it using words, and track its growth over time.

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### *Directions*, page 3 of 3

9. (*optional*) Make a timeline tracking your plant's life. Include important details like how long it took for leaves, buds, or flowers to appear. Also mark how frequently you watered the plant.

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10. Talk about it:

- Are there other things in your life that you have to take care of?
  - What lessons can you learn from gardening?
  - Are there other plants in your home or classroom? Who cares for them? Could you help?
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11. (*optional*) You may want to move your plant outdoors once it has outgrown its pot.

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For more activities and information about *Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers* and Lady Bird Johnson, visit (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/firstlady/>).

## Plant a Seed

### ThinkAbout

My plant will probably be this tall \_\_\_\_\_ (inches).

My plant probably will/won't have flowers.

My plant is called \_\_\_\_\_.

My plant is a native species for my state, \_\_\_\_\_.

*My plant today ...*

<i>Today is ...</i>	<i>How can I describe it in words?</i>	<i>I can see ...</i>	<i>How tall is it? (in inches)</i>	<i>Other notes or drawings</i>
		<input type="checkbox"/> stalk <input type="checkbox"/> leaf <input type="checkbox"/> bud <input type="checkbox"/> flower		
		<input type="checkbox"/> stalk <input type="checkbox"/> leaf <input type="checkbox"/> bud <input type="checkbox"/> flower		
		<input type="checkbox"/> stalk <input type="checkbox"/> leaf <input type="checkbox"/> bud <input type="checkbox"/> flower		
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		<input type="checkbox"/> stalk <input type="checkbox"/> leaf <input type="checkbox"/> bud <input type="checkbox"/> flower		

It took \_\_\_\_ days for my plant to change from a seed to a plant with leaves.

It took \_\_\_\_ *more* days for my plant to grow buds.

It took \_\_\_\_ *more* days for my plant's buds to bloom into flowers.

## Plant a Seed

### Teacher Guide, page 1 of 1

Read the “Directions” and “Parent Guide” sheets for step-by-step instructions.

#### OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to:

- Name and describe a native species for their area.
- Describe Lady Bird Johnson and her beautification project.

#### STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Uses logical verbal descriptions on ThinkAbout sheet.
- Accurately measures and records the growth and development of plant on ThinkAbout sheet.
- (*optional*) Creates an accurate timeline for plant growth and development.

#### STANDARDS

##### *NCHS History Standards*

##### *K-4 Historical Content Standards*

- 4C. The student understands historic figures who have exemplified values and principles of American democracy.

##### *Benchmarks for Science Literacy*

##### *Grades K-2*

- 5-A-2: Plants and animals have features that help them live in different environments.
- 11-C-3: Things can change in different ways, such as in size, weight, color, and movement.
- 12-D-1: Describe and compare things in terms of number, shape, texture, size, weight, color, and motion.

##### *Grades 3-5*

- 12-A-1: Keep records of their investigations and observations and not change the records later.

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/firstlady/>