



Help children's imagination and curiosity about the natural world to blossom, as they enjoy some floral fun in the mud kitchen or role-play area. Playing with these beautiful blooms will cultivate descriptive language, counting and creativity.

Seeds of inspiration

The flower stones are beautifully visual and tactile, providing sensory feedback as children feel with their fingers the same details they observe with their eyes. They offer a fertile ground for discussion, language development and growing children's knowledge and understanding of the natural world:

- You might like to plant the flowers in an intriguing setting for children to discover, such as tucked among leaves in a basket or simply nestled in a grassy area.
- Ask questions about the stones to develop children's thinking, vocabulary and observational skills. Do the children recognise any of the flowers? Have they ever seen any of them growing or in a flower display? What colours and shapes are they? How many petals do they have – or are there too many to count?
- Compare the flowers with real flowers. Do the real flowers have a smell – if so, do the children like it? Can they see any seeds in the flowers? Can they see any other parts of the real flowers – such as stems, leaves or buds? Why do many people like to have flowers in their houses and gardens where they can see them?
- What time of year might these flowers grow? Are there any flowers growing nearby at the moment? What season is it?
- Which insects might visit these flowers? What do they collect from them? What do bees make with the nectar they collect from flowers? You might like to observe which insects visit any flowers in or near your setting, and keep a record together.
- The free Match and Tidy Mat is ideal for comparing features as children match the flowers to the corresponding picture – and for keeping a tidy flower arrangement.

Floral fantasy

The flower stones allow creative play to flourish in a role-play area, mud kitchen or small-world play invitation:

- Create a garden area for role-play, with potting soil, flowerpots or planters, trowels and other garden tools, watering cans, labels, sticks, pebbles, seeds and pieces of foliage, as well as the flower stones.



- Offer a miniature garden for small-world horticulture. This could be in a large tray, with a potting soil base, beds marked out using pebbles, small plant pots and garden tools, the flower stones, and small plants or bits of foliage. You might like to add insect figures to visit the flowers.
- Inspire imaginative play with botanical potion-making in the mud kitchen. The potions can be simply water-based, or you might like to offer dyed water, bubbly water or colourful slime. As well as the flower stones, ingredients could include non-toxic leaves, herbs, petals, flowerheads, seeds, spices and good old mud!



- Offer a flower-themed sensory tray using the flower stones alongside tactile natural materials such as leaves, pebbles, petals, dried petals, flowerheads and seeds. As a base, you might like to include painted chickpeas, colourful sand, play dough or colourful rice. Alternatively, freeze real or artificial flowerheads in water, using an ice cube tray or small containers – children will love cracking open the ice blocks to free the flowers.
- The flower stones could feature in other open-ended role-play invitations, such as a florist, market stall or beekeeping farm.



Flower power

The natural beauty of flowers makes them ideal for many artistic activities:

- Imprint the stones into small balls of colourful play dough. You could roll out a large piece of green dough, then use the flower prints to create a flower meadow or a beautiful bouquet. Add real leaves to complete the design.
- Alternatively, knead ready mixed paint into air dry clay (adding a small blob of paint at a time), then roll the clay into a ball and press it flat for the children to imprint with one of the flower stones. Once dried out, these could make perfect Mother's Day gifts. (To make these last longer, seal the outside with a layer of PVA glue.)
- Create a sunflower-themed table, with a picture of one of Van Gogh's Sunflower paintings, real or artificial sunflowers, the sunflower stones and paints for children to have a go at painting their own sunflowers. Alternatively, you might like to offer cut-out yellow petals and sunflower seeds (check for allergies), for children to stick onto paper to create sunflower pictures.





- Draw a large picture of a bouquet, garland or meadow, with the flowerheads left blank, so children can add the flower stones to complete the design.
- Use real flowers such as daisies or buttercups, leaves, twigs and grass cuttings to create simple flower-themed pictures or patterns on a surface outside. Other natural additions might include shells, feathers, cones, pebbles, moss, acorns and seeds.

Books about flowers

Errol's Garden by Gillian Hibbs

Sam Plants a Sunflower by Kate Petty

The Big Book of Blooms by Yuval Zommer

Songs about flowers

Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary

Ring-a-ring-a-roses

I Love the Mountains

Get talking – useful words

Flowerhead, petal, stem, leaf, root, pollen, nectar, seed, trumpet, garden, sow, water, prune, cut, arrange, bouquet, garland, meadow.