



# Kids

## Bank Holiday

### Activities



# Bee Bombs & Basil

Spring is finally here and with Summer fast approaching there's no better time to sow your first bee bomb. These "bombs" are especially resilient and easily adapted to most home gardening conditions; be they flower pots or even a tracked path in the yard. Best of all, these pollinating plants will provide local bees with the essential nutrients they need to survive.

Simply put, bee bombs are often sold in small satchels or boxes and contain hundreds of pollinating wildflower seeds (often with as many as 18 different species). These seeds

packs are often blended with dry clay or top soil, which help to protect the seeds during the early stages of germination.

You don't need to be an experienced or even amateur gardener to tend a successful bee bomb. The low stakes and relative success rate make this a perfect activity for children, as day on day they track the growth of their new wildflower garden. Exact instructions may vary depending on the brand/style of your bee bomb, and most (if not all) should come with printed instructions, but the following should provide a brief detail of the process.



Step 1

## Find your bee bomb

Pollinating flower packets are widely available, especially during this time of year. Many supermarkets - such as Aldi or Lidl - have pollinating seed boxes for as little as £3. Alternatively, you should have no trouble finding bee bombs for sale at any local nursery or hardware store.

Step 2

## Set the soil

It is important to provide your seeds with a clear patch of undisturbed soil, as they may be slow to grow and will be overshadowed by nearby grasses. Any stretch of cleared earth will do, or else a wide flower pot or window fitting.

Step 3

## Spread your seeds

According to Bee bombs Ireland, those packed with clay or top soil can be spread along the dirt's surface, as the clay provides adequate protection until the seeds begin to grow. For unadorned seed packets, consider sewing several centimetres into the soil.

Step 4

## Water and wait

As these are wildflowers, your pollinating garden should require relatively little attention. However, it is important (especially during those early stages) to ensure they stay hydrated. Note that not all seeds will flower in the first year. Biennials and perennials, for example, may grow but not flower until the second year.

Admittedly there is a bit of a waiting game when it comes to bee bombs, but don't despair. Take this time to plant a small herb garden of basil, mint, or parsley. These dynamic plants are quick to grow and may be used to accent a number of home-cooked meals. To plant and care for these seedlings, to watch them grow and bloom and attract new life, is a uniquely rewarding experience, one that your child is sure to carry well into the future.

# Tie Dye Surprise

With Spring comes spring cleaning and the perfect time to tie-dye some new life into your old clothes. There are very few “rules” when it comes to tie-dye, making it the perfect activity for children (and adults) of all ages. Once dried, you can steam fabric paint or glitter across the front and back for an even wilder design, or use a brush to write a message across the chest; the possibilities are endless.

Tie-dye is a particularly rewarding activity for its promotion of choice and individuality. Children are empowered to select their own colour scheme and dye style (would they like a more spiral approach? Or crumple?), as well as the added text message or design applied thereafter. That said, because we are dealing with fabric colouring it is important to employ a certain degree of adult supervision, making it an ideal family fun project.

YouTube offers a wealth of guided tutorials on the subject, and it may also serve as a source of inspiration for more involved design techniques (the shibori method, for example). While some instructional videos may vary, the following steps will put you well on your way to a wonderful tie-dye surprise:



## Gather your materials

- With little exception, most of the necessary materials you need can easily be found around the house:
- Cotton t-shirts (white and lighter fabrics are best)
- Stock pot or plastic container (large enough to fully submerge your t-shirt in water)
- Rubber bands (to fix and fasten your shirt for dyeing)
- Salt or Soda Ash (this will adhere the dye to the fabric)
- Spoon (for dissolving the salt water solution, and ladling dye onto the shirt) Fabric dye (widely available in most craft or hobby shops)
- Plastic squirt bottles (to keep and apply multiple coloured dyes)



## Set your t-shirt

- The “crumple” and “spiral” methods are among the most popular tie dye designs, but feel free to experiment with a range of techniques
- To crumple: bunch your t-shirt into a loose ball, before binding it up in rubber bands. The more tightly fixed your shirt, the more detail is likely to come through in the end.
- To spiral: pinch your t-shirt up from the chest before setting it down. Tightly roll the shirt, as if to wring it dry, before applying rubber bands every few inches. The result should look more like a baguette.



## Prepare your dyes and fabric

- In order for the dye to fully adhere to the fabric, shirts must first be set in a warm “activator solution”.
- Simply dissolve salt or soda ash into warm water (exact ratios will vary but should roughly adhere to 9 tsp salt/soda ash : 1 gal. water). Dye solutions will adhere to a similar process, with exact ratios clearly defined on the package.
- Once dissolved, fully submerge your t-shirt for 5-15 minutes before removing. Be sure to ring out any excess water back into the solution.



## Apply the dye

- Using a ladled spoon or plastic container, apply the chosen dyes to your fabric.
- Experiment with different palettes and saturation levels; the more deeply saturated your fabric is with colour, the brighter it will appear.
- Once the shirt is fully saturated, store it inside a plastic bag for 6-8 hours, leaving all rubber bands fastened. This will allow the colours to absorb.

Now for the big reveal! Having allowed the dyes to saturate the fabric, you can now pull apart the rubber bands to unveil your new tie-dye design.

# An Ode for Any Occasion

But what exactly is an ode? It's a celebration! I often liken it to the man or woman screaming down from their rooftop, so overcome with joy they can't help but to share that love with everyone passing by. There is no restriction of subject matter and in fact some of the best odes honour the most trivial aspects of our day. Pablo Neruda, for example, has written odes to laziness, tomatoes, even a pair of socks (I once wrote an ode to a friend's crooked tooth as a symbol of her independence). The primary objective,

no matter your subject, is to make the reader feel what you do for that person, place, or thing. Even if I never met your grandmother, I should feel and/or understand your love for her by the end of the poem.

Your approach may differ depending on the writer and their vision. Some will be chomping at the bit to get going without a word of advice, where others may need a bit more instruction. For those poets I break down the process into three manageable components.

Step 1

## Select your subject

Remember, odes can be about anything at all. What's most important is that you care about your subject. Consider these examples (all fair game, by the way):

- A favourite game, sport, hobby, or toy
- A sibling or family member, a close friend, an adored pet, a favourite celebrity
- A movie or song, a favourite food or vacation destination

Step 2

## Map it out

Using a scrap sheet of paper, write your subject at the top of the page. Now take a few minutes to free write as many descriptive and/or narrative details as you can (or as many as you want to include). I find it often helps to consider the five senses, for example:

- How does it look?
- What does it smell like?
- Can you taste it?
- How does it feel?
- What kind of sound does it make?

Of course, some of these will be easier than others (you can't very well taste a sock, right?) Don't worry about covering all five senses, these are only meant to help foster your own great ideas. Or for the more adventurous, consider it a challenge in metaphor. Maybe you can't taste a sock but you could love it as much as the taste of \_\_\_\_\_, for example.

Step 3

## Write your ode

Believe it or not, that was actually the hardest part of this whole process. Now begins the fun stuff, putting all your ideas together in one terrific poem. If at all possible, see if you can use up everything on your cloud map.



But where to start, and how? I typically suggest one of two avenues, and have written a number of odes in either mode to equal affect. You may choose to address your subject (*"Matilda, you are the greatest wombat, I love how your legs..."*) or maybe you want to share your subject with the reader (*"Have you ever seen a wombat? My pet wombat Matilda, she must be the greatest..."*)

There truly is no right or wrong answer and in some cases your pen will naturally gravitate toward one or the other.

# Gratitude Scrapbook

It's easy to stay fixed on the negative, so much that we can often overlook the simple pleasures of our every day. But gratitude is contagious, and the more we lean into it, the more cause for celebration we're likely to find.

One of the most effective ways to hone and grow this gift of gratitude is through journaling or, in this case, scrapbooking. Scrapbooks are especially kid-friendly, in that it allows for more creativity and collage than a traditional

diary, whose textual emphasis may feel more like homework to some children.

There is truly no right or wrong way to keep one, so long as it feels uniquely their own. Encourage your child to create and decorate the front and back covers, to make it multi-coloured or cluttered in photos, glue, and glitter.

Scrapbooks can be made from any empty notebook, diary, or photo album, making this an easily accessible project even now. Alternatively, it may also be fun to shop online alongside your child, allowing them to find that "perfect" journal.

But what exactly is this scrapbook of gratitude, and how can we possibly find something to appreciate every single day? Well, suppose the day begins with a welcome wake-up from your dog, lapping at your face with excitement, or a nice hot shower and that body wash you love so much. To honour and acknowledge these simple joys, that is the heart of gratitude, and what a beautiful day it is if we can catch those moments as they happen.

You might be surprised how quickly it all comes together, and how effortlessly. To start, challenge your child to make one entry each day, with as much or little detail as they like. Encourage the inclusion of photos or memorabilia (ticket stubs, candy wrappers, etc.) where possible; anything to document their entry in a meaningful way.

Some children may require a bit of assistance in the early stages, while others may benefit from a more guided instruction. The following are just a few contemplative suggestions:

- Walk us through your favourite part of the day. What made today stand out from every other?
- Did you witness an act of kindness, or was someone kind to you?
- Were you pleasantly surprised today? How can you give a pleasant surprise to someone else?
- Where do you want to go this year? What do you hope to accomplish?

The suggestions here are limitless, and may become more apparent over time. I like to imagine gratitude as a kind of muscle in the body, one that needs regular exercise and attention to become strong. It may feel weak or slightly awkward at the start, but if we nurture those feelings then over time that gratitude can become something of a sixth sense. What's more, this scrapbook will stand as a lasting piece of your child's youth, one they can look back on years from now and recall exactly where and who they were this year.