Session 5: Plantzilla

Program Outline

A. Gathering Activity: KWL Sheet Indoor Plants (10 min.)
B. Hands-on Horticulture activity: Making a Garden Pet (20 min.)
C. Reading ***Plantzilla*** (15 min.)
D. Postcard to Mr. Lester (10 min.)
E. Wrap up (5 min.)

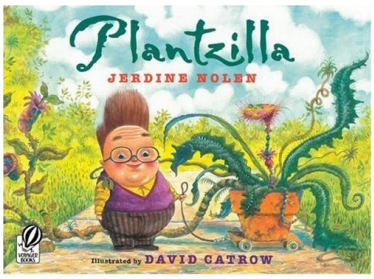
Extra Advance Preparations:

Collect and cut bottles. Make arrangements to borrow some interesting potted indoor plants from MGEVs. If possible, try to find a Venus fly trap or other carnivorous plants for participants to observe with the KWL sheet.

Supplies:

- Sign-in sheets
- Name tags
- ***KWL Sheet*** from Session 4 & new ***KWL Sheet*** for Session 5
- Table covers
- Pencils, crayons, and/or markers
- 1 personal-sized recycled beverage bottle (20 oz.), clear plastic, with lid on. (Milk jugs with handle left on and hole cut in them also work, or you can just have participants create faces on the sides of a standard pot.)
- Scissors
- Glue (school glue or low-temperature hot glue)
- Assorted craft supplies: wiggly eyes, pipe cleaners, pompoms, feathers, etc.
- Construction paper
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Markers
- Awl, punch, or sharp knife
- Potting soil
- Pothos plant cuttings (or similar, easy-to-root house plant)
- Plastic spoons
- Watering bottles
- Food storage bags and twist ties
- Trash bags
- Hand whisk broom and dustpan
- ***Postcard to Mr. Lester*** sheet
- Copies of ***Grow On!*** for Session 5,
- Copies of take-home journal sheet 5 ***(Where I Live and Play: Indoor Plants)***

MG SPROUTS
Horticulture Activities for Kids



Plantzilla by Jerdine Nolen, illustrated by David Catrow. Silver Whistle, © 2002. 32 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0152053925

Mortimer Henryson loves Plantzilla, the plant he's been taking care of all year in his third-grade classroom. He loves him so much, he takes him home for summer vacation. What could go wrong with a . . . plant? But life in the Henryson household soon takes a strange turn. A pot roast disappears, then steaks from the grill--and where has Mrs. Henryson's prize Chihuahua gone? -Goodreads

Themes: Humor, responsibility, caring for living things.

***BIG Idea*:** Caring for plants and other living things is engaging and an enjoyable experience.

Reading vocabulary

plant food

symbiotic

metamorphosis

commotion

A. Gathering Activity: KWL Sheet - Indoor Plants (10-15 minutes)

Have one volunteer at the sign in table to greet participants and hand out name tags. Have a volunteer collect Favorite Vegetable Recipe Sheets and any journal sheets as participants check in. Hand out the KWL sheets saved from the last session on vegetables and have participants take a few minutes to finish the final section, "L-learned." When they have completed that section, collect those sheets and give them the new sheet for Session 5. At each table, have some indoor plant specimens in an opaque box or covered tray. Open the box when the participants begin working on the K & W sections of Session 5 sheet. Allow children about 10 minutes to work. Ask prompting questions as they work, such as "Where do you think these potted plants grow in nature?", "Are there buildings you visit that have plants growing in them? Why might those plants be growing there? Who takes care of them?", If the children are not yet writing, have volunteers assist by taking dictation and encourage children to draw pictures to illustrate.

B. Hands-on Horticulture: Making a Plant Pet (20 minutes)

Hands-On Horticulture: Making a Plant Pet	
We will make a fun plant pet from a recycled beverage bottle.	
MATERIALS • 1 personal-sized recycled beverage bottle (20 oz.), clear plastic, with lid on • Scissors • Glue (school glue or low-temperature hot glue) • Assorted craft supplies, like wiggly eyes, pipe cleaners, pompoms, feathers, rocks, glitter, etc. • Construction paper • Pencils • Scissors • Markers • Awl, punch, or sharp knife • Potting soil • Pothos plant cuttings (or similar, easy-to-root house plant) • Plastic spoons • Watering bottles • Food storage bags and twist ties	
DIRECTIONS Note: Adult leaders need to cut the bottles prior to participants decorating them as some sort of "critter". Craft or school glue is easiest for doing this activity, but needs a little time to dry before children fill the bottles with potting soil and sow seeds. Low-temperature "hot glue" will set faster and be stronger, but needs to be used with care and oversight. The hands-on activity will start first, then the reading will happen while the glue is drying.	
Prepare the bottles prior to Session 5	Rinse any plastic bottles that have beverage residue in them. Allow bottles to dry, and replace the cap. Remove any labels. Lay the bottle on its side and hold in place on a solid surface. Using a knife, awl, or punch, puncture the side panel of the beverage bottle, then use the scissors to cut a rectangle in the side of the bottle. This will be the opening for the planter. Make sure that you do not cut so much that the integrity of the bottle is compromised.

Create a garden pet.	*In today's story we are going to learn about a boy named Mortimer. His plant is named Plantzilla, and it is rather like a pet. So we're going to make our own plant pet!* (Show a completed plant pet.) *Let's first decorate the bottle like a "critter." You can choose to create an insect or animal, or some other pretend garden pet. Does everyone have a plastic bottle?*
Let's create the face.	*We'll first create a face on the end of the bottle with the lid. Trace the lid on a piece of construction paper and cut out the circle with your scissors. Next, we'll glue the circle of paper to the lid. Choose some wiggly eyes and glue them onto the paper. Use your markers to finish the face.*
Decorate the body • Pipe cleaners as antennae or tails • Colorful feathers • Construction paper shapes • Stones or large beans (4 per pet) to keep it from rolling	*Now, let's add details to our pet. Does your pet need wings? How about antennae? Feet? Stripes? Scales?* (Depending upon the pet chosen, details can be added to the body. Children will need help adhering the pieces. Use the glue gun to glue large bean seeds or rocks as "feet" to stabilize bottle and keep it from rolling.)
Let the glue dry.	*We need to let the glue dry on our pets, so let's go over to our reading spot to read our story.* (Set the critter aside to dry.)
Fill with soil.	*Now that the glue on our pets is dry, let's plant our pets. We need soil in the body of the pet. We'll use our cups as scoops and get some potting soil to fill the body cavity (bottle) with potting soil. We want to leave 1" of space from the cut opening of the bottle*.
Plant the pet.	*We're going to stick cuttings of a houseplant that we know as pothos into our plant pet. This plant roots very easily – see these bumps on the stem near the leaves?* (Hold up a section of stem and show the root initials.) *Those are root initials and they will grow quickly into new roots. You'll be able to see these roots growing through the side of your plant pet*. *Everyone should have three cuttings like this* (hold up a pothos cutting) *and their spoon. Use the handle of the spoon to make a hole for the cutting, then stick the stem of the cutting into the soil. You want to have the leaves at the soil surface. Use your watering bottle to moisten the soil.* (Repeat until everyone has three cuttings stuck in their plant pet.) *What are you going to name your pet?* (discussion)
Caring for the pet.	*Each day, you will want to check to see if your plant pet is moist. Remember how we check to see if the soil is moist? We'll gently touch the soil and see if it is damp and sticks to our fingers. Water when it is dry, and be careful not to overwater. The pothos should start forming roots in a week or so. In a few more weeks, new leaves should start appearing! In time, you will be able to make even more cuttings from your plant pet!* (Place plant pets inside food storage bags for transporting home.)

C. Reading Aloud: Plantzilla (15 minutes)

(Note: this book may be difficult to read without some practice prior to the read-aloud. The letter fonts give good clues as to the character voice, but may be hard to read upside down. Two copies of the book may be helpful so that the illustrations of one can be displayed as the other is read aloud.)

Summary: An adorable boy brings home the classroom plant for the summer and strange things begin to happen as his attachment to the plant grows. Introduce the book and set the stage for what's going to happen in the book. Read the book aloud, pausing briefly along the way to discuss the book with the group and point out the action in the illustrations. Conclude the reading with a short discussion about the book. Some questions you might ask to spur discussion are:

- W*ho is Mortimer?*
- *Where was Mr. Lester staying on his vacation?*
- *Did you notice how this story was told?*
- *Do you ever write letters?*
- *What do you think happened to Grollier the chihuahua?*
- *Why did Mom want to send Plantzilla back?*
- *Have you ever brought a pet home from school to care for?*
- *What happened at the end of the story?*

D. Wrap Up & Postcard to Mr. Lester (5 minutes)

(Note: Allow more time and skip the postcard activity if you are using carnivorous plants with the KWL sheet.) Remind the participants about how the characters in Plantzilla communicated by writing letters. Have the children name write the name of their plant pet and write or draw a pretend postcard to Mr. Lester about it and how they will care for it. If you run short of time, have the participants take the activity sheet and complete it at home.)

Wrap up

Wrap up the session with a quick summary of the day's activities. The discussion might go something like this: *Today, we finished our KWL sheet about vegetables. Did anyone visit a place where vegetables are grown or sold? Did you record it on your take-home journal sheet? We started a new KWL sheet to get us thinking about plants that we might grow indoors. Have any of you ever been to a place where they grow a lot of plants indoors?* (You can mention conservatories, greenhouses, shopping malls, home with a sunroom or sunny window, etc.) *In our story, we read all about Plantzilla and how Mortimer cared for him, almost like a pet. Then we made our own plant pet. We wrote a postcard to Mr. Lester about our plant pet.* Take a moment to remind them about their journal take-home sheets. Ask participants to share where they might look for indoor plants to make observations about for their sheet. Ask them to record them on the sheet and bring them back to the next session to share with the group and add to their journal.

Next week we will talk about The Tree Farmer.

Children go home with: Plant pet, ***Postcard to Mr. Lester***, ***Where I Live and Play: Indoor Plants*** take-home journal sheet, ***Grow On!*** for Session 5

Session Notes:

Review

Next week

For follow up