



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension



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## Turtle Sprouts

Creating a Turtle Sprout is an easy, fun, and accessible activity that introduces children to the world of plants. The activity requires little preparation and can be used as springboard for a new living sculpture project like those highlighted in the upcoming Garden Based Learning Program's Living Sculpture online curriculum.

We are encouraging educators in CCE programs to use this activity as an exciting statewide growing project for Cloverbuds. Turtle Sprouts is a simple activity with all the pieces: it's a state-wide project aimed at galvanizing youth and adults across NY and can be shown at State Fair; it's easy to do, a great introduction to plants and may just be a catalyst for a bigger project with lots of room to expand and be creative.

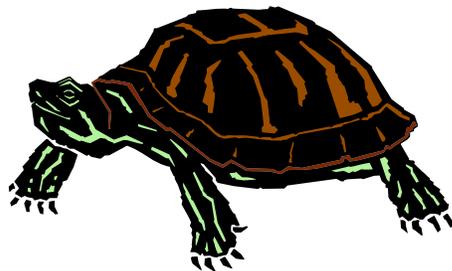
Turtle Sprouts offers many "layers" and can be a launching point for other investigations and activities.

### You might consider:

- Sending Turtle Sprouts to the New York State Fair.
- Doing a public presentation on how to make a Turtle Sprout.
- Adapting the activity to other creations, shapes, and forms.
- Working with science inquiry: what is the best method to water? What happens if the soil and water are mixed first versus after? Is there a way to create a "wick" with the stocking end? How does light effect a Turtle Sprout?
- Teaching this activity to older youth mentors that lead the activity with younger children.

### Supplies

4" plastic pot saucer  
knee high stocking  
craft foam  
untreated grass seed  
potting soil/promix  
scissors  
markers  
google eyes  
tacky glue  
cereal bowl  
water



## Instructions

1. Cut craft foam into the shape of a turtle “skeleton.” Add eyes, claws, scales or other decorations using markers, google eyes, and tacky glue.
2. Place the “skeleton” on top of the 4” pot saucer. The saucer serves as the turtle’s belly.
3. Roll one knee high stocking up your arm until completely stretched. Starting near your elbow, roll the stocking down to your wrist. From here you can remove it from your hand, creating a bowl shape.
4. Scoop 2 to 4 heaping spoonfuls of untreated grass seed into the bottom of your stocking bowl.
5. Fill the stocking with soil, unrolling as you go along so that the stocking can hold more soil. You’ll need about 2 cups of soil per stocking.  
\* Note: it’s much easier to work with dry soil than moist soil.
6. Holding your stocking, which looks more snake-like than shell-like, at the open end, gently bounce and press against the palm of your other hand to create more of a pancake or shell shape. Once you’ve achieved the shape you desire, tie the stocking off close to the soil, very much like a balloon. You can trim the excess stocking off if you’d like.
7. Looking at your shell you should be able to see the grass seed through the stocking. If the seed is gathered in one spot, gently use your fingers to spread the seed out evenly over the top of the shell. Be careful though, grass seed needs some light to germinate so you don’t want the seed to be buried beneath the soil.
8. Once the seed is evenly spread make sure to water the shell generously. The stocking can often prevent water from reaching the soil if watered from the top. A good alternative is to fill a cereal-sized bowl full of water and place your shell inside. Capillary action will draw the water up through the soil until completely moistened. This can take 1-2 hours depending on how dry the soil is. Feel free to flip your shell around half way through.
9. Once watered place your shell on top of your skeleton to complete your turtle and find a sunny spot for it to sit.
10. Check once a day to see if your shell needs water. Repeat step 8 to water when needed.

The turtle shell should sprout within a week. With enough light and water your shell will continue to grow for months. If the grass gets too tall trim with scissors to shorten or create interesting designs.

