



MINI ZEN GARDENS

Materials you need:

- Clean, shallow trays from the recycle bin. Takeaway containers, meat and foil trays work well.
- Fine white sand
- Small pebbles – coloured or natural tone
- Flat, polished stones
- Plastic forks or small twigs
- Craft sticks for smoothing the sand

Setup for play:

- Show children pictures online of zen gardens and talk about their origin and purpose.
- Lay out the materials and trays on a large table and encourage children to add some sand then arrange their own zen garden design using the pebbles and stones.
- Use the fork or twigs to create patterns or 'ripples' in the sand. They can also use the craft sticks to drag along the sand to make a smooth surface and start over with a different design.

What are they learning with this activity?

As the children make their own mini zen gardens they are learning to:

- Use hand/eye coordination skills and increase their spatial awareness
- Strengthen fine motor muscles, visual motor integration and control
- Manipulate equipment and real-life tools with increasing competence
- Listen to and follow directions
- Show increasing independence and competence
- Create with different mediums and textures
- Make decisions about the materials they want to use and what works best.
- Work independently on a project
- Use descriptive language to describe textures, materials and actions.
- Broaden their understanding of the world
- Challenge their sense of touch and sensory processing
- Express themselves creatively
- Use their senses to explore and choose natural materials
- To self-regulate and calm self

Extending the play:

- Work through a guided meditation with the children – there are lots of great ones on Spotify and YouTube to try.
- Do some simple yoga moves and stretching with the children to help calm down after school.

