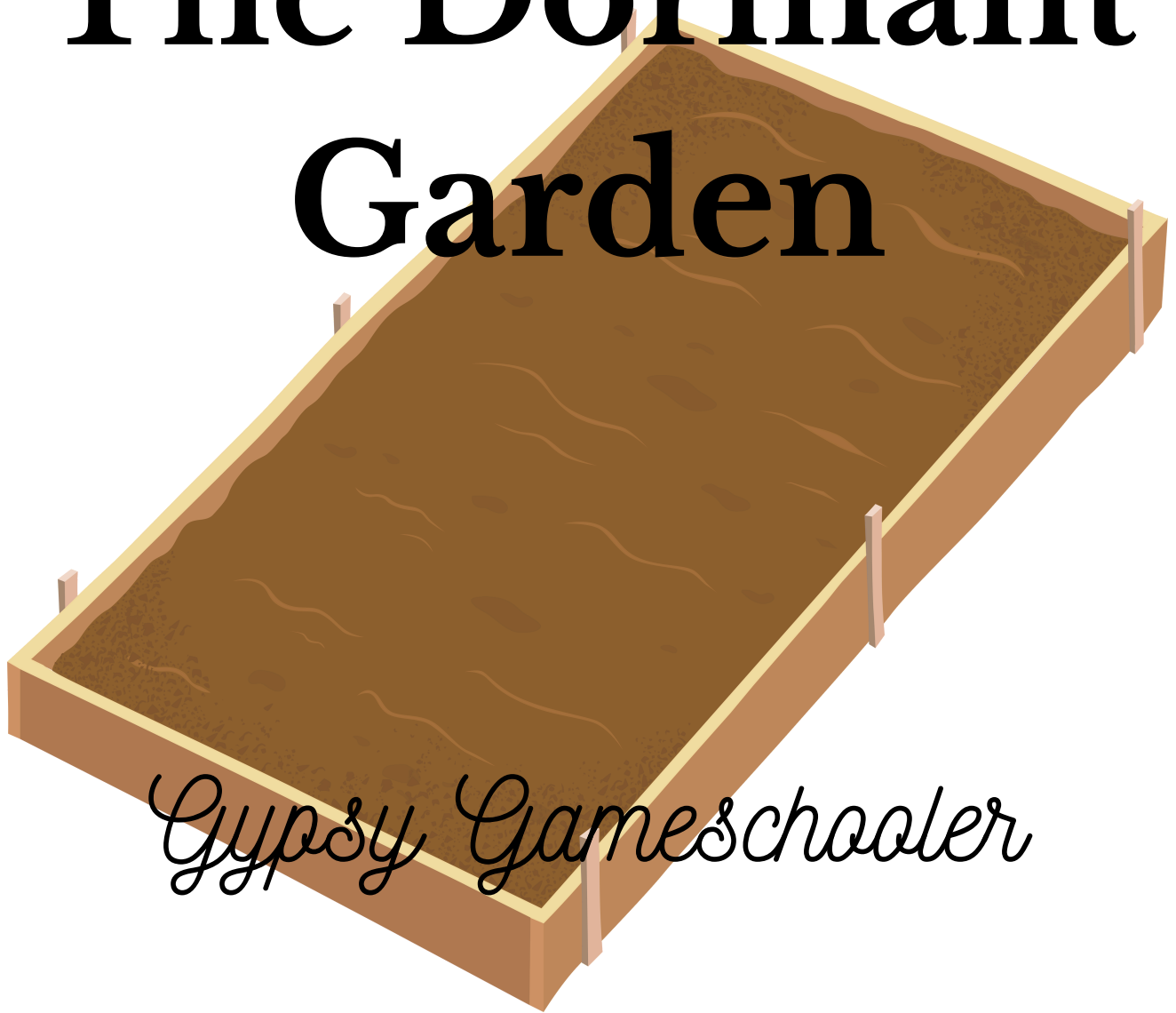


The Dormant Garden



Gypsy Gameschooler

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OVERVIEW

Make your kids' Spring Unit Study unforgettable with the Dormant Garden! Featuring a story and 7 evidence pages, this fun and engaging printable game will be a huge hit for kids ages 8 and up. Whether you're planning a party for your child, a co-op game day, a sleepover, or just need some rainy-day activities for family game night, this spring game is perfect for you.

Looking for a mystery experience at home without all the fuss? Look no further! Our printable mystery game is perfect for you. With no complicated shapes to cut out, and no folding or taping required, our low-prep mystery allows you to experience the thrill of the mystery game right away.

Our mystery game is designed to be easy to set up and play, with no props or complicated instructions required. Kids can examine the evidence individually or in small groups, making it a great activity for classrooms, youth groups, or team-building exercises. With our mystery game kit, you'll have everything you need to create an exciting adventure for your little ones from the comfort of your own home.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE INSTANT DOWNLOAD?

PDF game guide (8.5 x 11)

Frequently asked questions

Set up instructions

Story

7 Pages of evidence

Hints

Solution

Gameplay: 30-60 minutes

Ages: 8+

Number of players: As many as you want!

DIRECTIONS



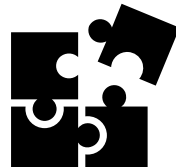
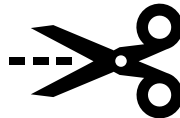
The story is on page 6. This can be printed out or read from the computer.

The evidence is on pages 7-13. It can be examined from your device (without printing) or you can print it. Make sure you have enough copies so that all members of your group can look at something.



It's okay if your kids come up with a different solution than the one provided. Science is messy and there are often many contributing causes!

Once all 7 pages of evidence have been printed, read the story out loud on page 6. Next, let the fun begin! Let kids know that they can examine the evidence in **ANY** order.



PRINTING THE GAME

Make sure you **download** the file to your computer **FIRST**, then **print**. Sometimes your computer opens the PDF in the default web browser (which makes black boxes appear around images when you print). It happens when trying to print from the preview URL when it opens in a new tab. Make sure you are using the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader (FREE) – rather than a preview application on Macs or web browsers. Grab Adobe here: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>

F.A.Q.

How long does this activity take to complete?

It really depends on a lot of things. Estimated completion time is 30-60 minutes but it's based on the kids' puzzle skills, group size, and age. We recommend ages 8+.

How many kids can play at once?

Kids can play individually, with friends or siblings, or in large groups. There really is no limit to the number of players.

What if the kids get stuck on one of the pieces of evidence?

It might be best to set it aside and come back to it later. With more of the information, the importance of the evidence might become more clear. This is also when having more people can come in handy; different people will notice different things.

Where do kids start?

Start with the story, but then the evidence can be examined in any order.

How do you know if their answers are correct?

The solution is provided in the PDF.

How do I set up the activity?

Just print and play! Everything you need is included in your download. You don't need locks, envelopes, or special equipment. You can hang or hide the evidence or just spread it out on the kitchen table.

Do I have to print out the game materials for every kid?

Not necessarily, though if you have a large group, it might be best to divide them up into smaller groups and print multiple copies. Alternatively, the evidence can be examined right from your computer screen!

The Case of the Dormant Garden

Disclaimer: While locations and gardening information is real and accurate, all people are fictional.

Setting: San Francisco, CA, spring 2025

Spring had arrived once again in San Francisco, and with it came the quiet excitement of new beginnings. In a small backyard tucked between narrow houses and winding streets, Gertie Danniell stood beside her raised garden beds, hands resting on the cool wooden edges. She had tended this garden for years. Each season followed a familiar rhythm: preparing the soil, planting seeds, waiting patiently, and then watching as tiny green shoots pushed upward toward the light.

Gardening, for Gertie, was more than just growing food. It was a way to mark time—to see the passing of seasons made visible in leaves and stems. She knew the habits of her garden well. She knew how the fog would soften the mornings, how the soil would warm slowly, and how, almost like clockwork, her seeds would begin to sprout within a couple of weeks.

But this year, something was wrong.

Weeks had passed since planting, and the soil remained still and silent. No delicate stems. No first leaves. No signs of life at all.

At first, Gertie assumed she simply needed more patience. Seeds could be unpredictable, after all. But as the days stretched on and nothing changed, a quiet worry began to settle in. She reviewed her planting notes carefully.

Concerned and determined to understand what had happened, Gertie sought advice from experts at the nearby University of California Cooperative Extension. They listened carefully as she described the problem and suggested an important next step: testing the soil itself.

Soil, they explained, is more than just dirt. It is a complex environment made up of minerals, nutrients, water, air, and living organisms. Even small changes in its chemistry can affect whether seeds are able to germinate.

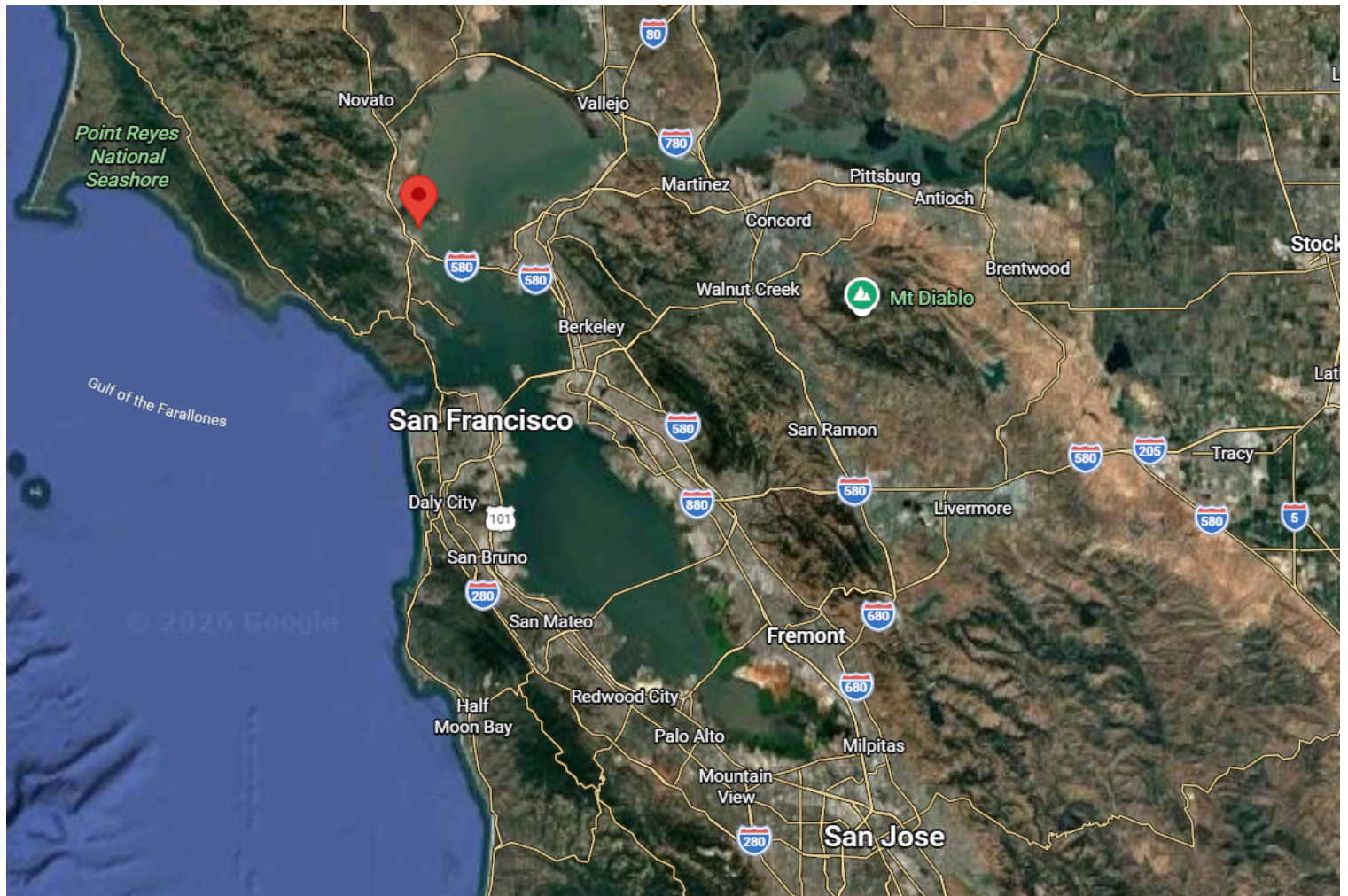
Following their recommendation, Gertie collected soil samples from each of her garden beds and brought them to the Alluvial Soil Lab for analysis. Now, with the test results in hand, the mystery could finally be investigated. Somewhere in the evidence lay the answer to a simple but important question:

Why has Gertie's garden remained dormant?

San Francisco, CA



Gertie's House:



Garden (Backyard) Map

House

Deck w/ potted plants



Lilac

A: Lettuce

C: Pea Pods

Potatoes
(eventually)

B: Carrots

D: Swiss Chard

Herbs
(eventually)

Vining Plants: roses, raspberries, grapes



Fruit Trees



Journal Entries

March 18, 2025

The fog rolled in early tonight, softening the edges of everything. I watched it creep between the buildings from my kitchen window while the kettle boiled. There's something comforting about it—like the city tucking itself in. I wonder if I'll ever get tired of this feeling, or if it will always feel a little magical. It's still chilly yet, but spring is in the air! My bulbs are up and so pretty.

April 2, 2025

Walked farther than I meant to today, just following whatever street sloped downward. My legs ached, but in a satisfying way. I passed strangers laughing outside cafes, dogs pulling their owners toward parks, someone playing guitar badly but enthusiastically. It reminded me how alive everything is here, even when I feel stuck.

April 12, 2025

The light was different this morning—clearer, sharper, like the day knew exactly what it was doing. I didn't, not really. But I took my time getting ready anyway, moving slower on purpose. It felt good not to rush, not to chase anything. Just to exist in the quiet space between obligations.

April 21, 2025

I've been thinking a lot about time lately. Not in a dramatic way, just noticing how quickly weeks blur together. I caught my reflection in a shop window and saw someone who looks more settled than she feels. Maybe that's what growing into yourself actually looks like from the outside. I started my garden a couple weeks ago and nothing is up yet. Very frustrating, but I've always been impatient.

May 14, 2025

Warm enough today to leave the windows open. The air smelled like salt and pavement and spring all at once. I sat on the floor with my coffee instead of at the table, just to break routine. It felt small, but intentional. I think I want more moments like that—chosen, not accidental.

My garden still hasn't come up, though, so I went and talked to Willma Brigham and Jun Guttuso at the University of California Cooperative Extension Center to ask for help. They told me to get my soil tested, so I took it to the Alluvial Soil Lab this afternoon. Should get the results in a few days.

Temperature Log

March	High	Low	April	High	Low	May	High	Low
1	58	49	1	59	51	1	63	52
2	58	50	2	61	45	2	61	51
3	59	41	3	62	43	3	64	52
4	59	50	4	40	44	4	65	47
5	57	49	5	68	47	5	84	50
6	58	45	6	67	49	6	69	53
7	64	41	7	64	54	7	65	50
8	63	41	8	64	51	8	71	50
9	47	44	9	74	48	9	80	51
10	62	42	10	67	52	10	70	54
11	64	41	11	64	53	11	63	53
12	59	48	12	63	49	12	63	53
13	55	46	13	73	45	13	66	53
14	57	43	14	68	49	14	67	53
15	59	50	15	64	54	15	69	53
16	61	47	16	62	54	16		
17	57	49	17	60	53	17		
18	59	43	18	63	52	18		
19	59	40	19	62	50	19		
20	61	45	20	64	49	20		
21	62	41	21	71	49	21		
22	61	47	22	65	51	22		
23	67	46	23	59	51	23		
24	78	48	24	58	51	24		
25	77	54	25	58	51	25		
26	65	53	26	60	44	26		
27	62	55	27	59	51	27		
28	61	53	28	64	46	28		
29	60	48	29	68	48	29		
30	66	50	30	66	51	30		
31	61	52				31		

Days to Maturity	Depth to Sow	Soil Temp for Germ.	Days to Germination	Thin plants to
75	1/4"	45-85° F	6-21	1-3"

Giants of Colmar Carrots

Daucus carota var. sativus

Carrots require full sun, but can tolerate up to 6 hours of shade a day (may lead to suboptimal crop and longer maturation times).

Moderate, consistent watering of about 1-2 inches per week. Increase frequency in hot, dry conditions and reduce in cold or rainy weather.

Prefer loose soil with a pH of 6.0-7.0, low nitrogen.

Days to maturity are calculated from date of direct seeding.

Direct Sowing

- Dig a shallow furrow and lightly cover seed with soil, vermiculite or sifted compost
- Water evenly and regularly to prevent soil crusting
- Row cover beds when soil temperatures are cool and to help prevent soil crusting
- Thin when plants are 4 inches tall
- Sow mid-June—July for a fall/winter crop

PO Box 158, Cottage Grove, CA
Phone Orders: 800-626-0866
Web: www.TerritorialSeed.com

TERRITORIAL
SEED COMPANY

Days to Maturity	Depth to Sow	Soil Temp for Germ.	Days to Germination	Thin plants to
70	1-1 1/2"	45-75° F	8-25	N/A

Oregon Sugar Pod II

Pisum sativum

Pea pods thrive in full sun to partial shade, requiring 6-8 hours of direct sun. Less light may result in few pods and leggier plants.

Moderate, consistent watering of about 1 inch per week. Increase frequency in hot, dry conditions and reduce in cold or rainy weather.

Prefer soil with a pH of 6.0-7.0, low nitrogen.

Days to maturity are calculated from date of direct seeding. Note: In areas with mild winters, such as the maritime Northwest, where peas can be planted in February, add 35-40 days.

Direct Sowing

- Peas may be sown as soon as the soil can be worked in the spring
- Cool temperatures lead to slow and erratic germination
- Sow peas in July for a fall crop
- In mild climates you can overwinter

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Days to Maturity	Depth to Sow	Soil Temp for Germ.	Days to Germination	Thin plants to
55	1/8"	40-80° F	2-15	10-16"

Bauer Lettuce

Lactuca sativa

Lettuce thrives in full sun to partial shade, requiring 4-6 hours of direct sun for optimal growth and flavor.

Moderate, consistent watering of about 1 inch per week. Increase frequency in hot, dry conditions and reduce in cold or rainy weather.

Prefer well-draining, fertile loamy soil with a pH of 6.0-7.0, enriched with compost.

Days to maturity are calculated from date of direct seeding.

Direct Sowing

- Use row cover to improve germination and prevent soil crusting
- As soon as 2-3 true leaves have formed, thin

Transplanting

- Start indoors 4-6 weeks before anticipated transplant date
- For extended harvest, plant every 2-3 weeks

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Days to Maturity	Depth to Sow	Soil Temp for Germ.	Days to Germination	Thin plants to
60	1/2"	50-75° F	5-17	10-16"

Bright Lights Swiss Chard

Beta vulgaris

Swiss chard thrives in full sun to partial shade, requiring 4-6 hours of direct sunlight daily for optimal leaf growth and vibrant colors.

Moderate, consistent watering of about 1-1.5 inches per week. Increase frequency in hot, dry conditions and reduce in cold or rainy weather.

Prefer well-draining, fertile loamy soil with a pH of 6.0-7.0, enriched with compost.

Days to maturity are calculated from date of direct seeding.

Direct Sowing

- Sow mid-spring through summer
- Thin when plants reach a height of 3 inches

Transplanting

- Start indoors 3-4 weeks before anticipated transplant date
- Start June-July for transplanting July-August for a fall/winter crop

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Gardening Log

March 18, 2025

Soil temp: 41°F

Weather: Cool morning, foggy then cloudy

Notes: Prepared beds for spring planting; turned in compost and covered

May 9, 2025

Soil temp: 55°F

Weather: Sunny, warm!

Notes: Rained last 3 days, soil drains well and is easy to work. Still no sprouts.

March 29, 2025

Soil temp: 49°F

Weather: Mild, partly cloudy, rainy afternoon

Notes: Planted carrots, lettuce, and pea pods

May 14, 2025

Soil temp: 56°F

Weather: drizzly

Notes: No germination in any bed. Talked to extension center, recommended soil testing. Dropped off sample today.

April 6, 2025

Soil temp: 47°F

Weather: Rainy morning, sunny afternoon

Notes: no sprouts yet

April 15, 2025

Soil temp: 50°F

Weather: Mild and drizzly

Notes: No sprouts yet. Planted Swiss chard

April 27, 2025

Soil temp: 50°F

Weather: chilly with showers

Notes: No sprouts. Replanted carrots, seeds, and lettuce.

Soil Analysis Report

ALLUVIAL
SOIL
LAB



Client: G. Danniell
Location: San Francisco, CA
Sample Date: May 14, 2025
Report Date: May 19, 2025
Samples: Garden Beds A-D

Alluvial Soil Lab
(831) 216-1367
info@alluvialsoillab.com
4546 El Camino Real B10-643
Los Altos, CA 94022
Technician: L. Hirata

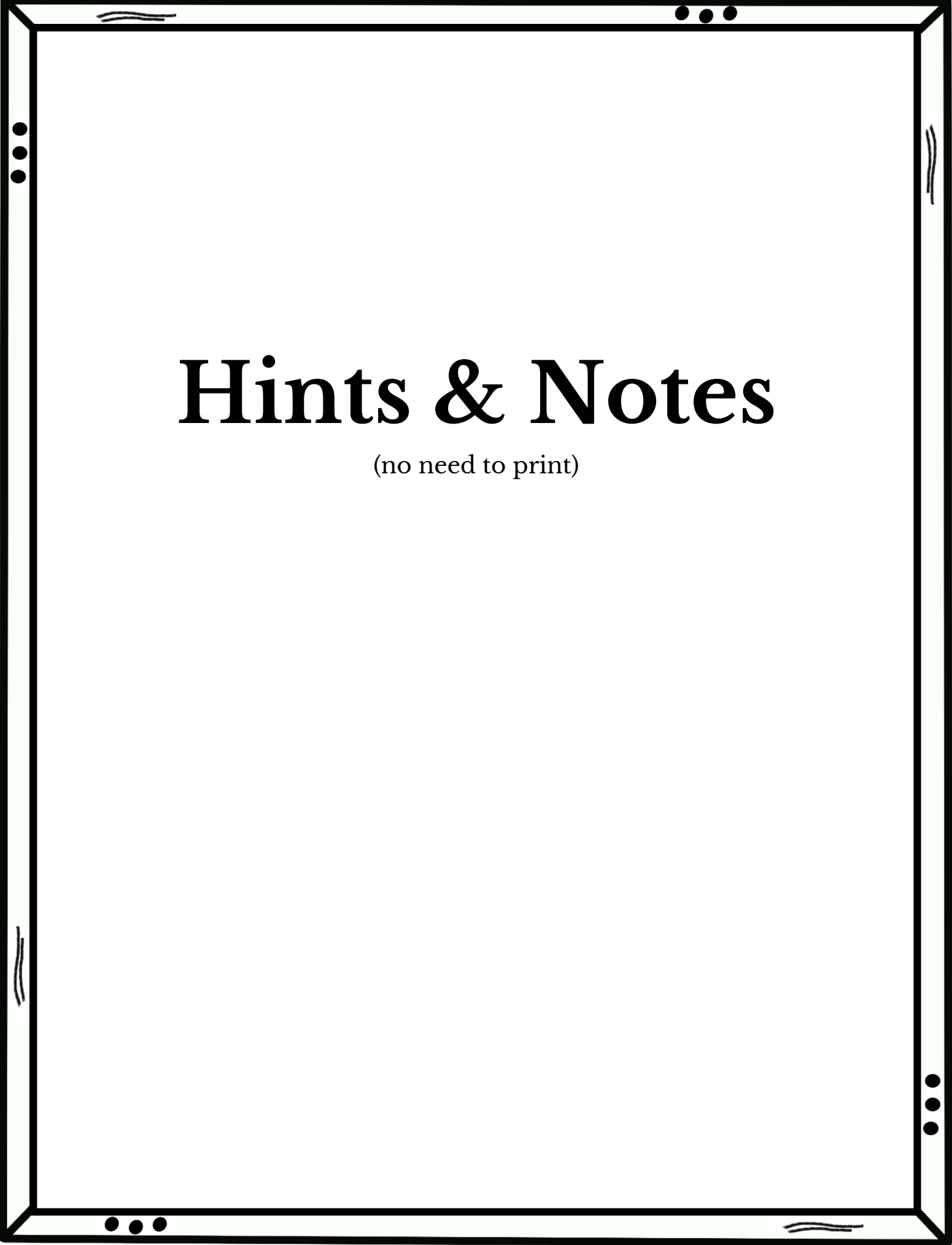
Sample	pH	N*	P*	K*	Salinity	Bacteria	Fungus
A	8.2	137	198	301	1.4 dS/m	neg.	neg.
B	6.8	148	201	300	1.6 dS/m	neg.	neg.
C	6.9	146	200	299	1.5 dS/m	neg.	neg.
D	7.9	135	202	303	1.7 dS/m	neg.	neg.

*measured in pounds per acre

Recommendations:

- Limestone can be used to raise garden pH. Follow dosing instructions carefully and retest after application.
- Add sulfur to lower garden pH. Again, follow dosing instructions carefully and retest after application.
- Planting crops best suited to the soil is often easier than adjusting the soil to suit the preferred crop.
- Aged manure or commercial fertilizers (check N-P-K ratios) may be used to increase nutrient availability.
- To lower nutrient levels in soil, plant nutrient-hungry crops and/or skip fertilizing for a few years.
- Salinity is only slightly elevated and should wash out naturally with rain. Protect garden beds from further salt damage or plant salt-resistant plants.

Technician: Liêm Seong-min Hirata



Hints & Notes

(no need to print)

Temperature Log

Finding averages might make it easier to notice patterns. The average is found by adding up all the data points and dividing it by the number of data points.

*data collected for the Temperature Log sheet from <https://wu-next-prod-us-east-2-aws.wunderground.com/history/monthly/us/ca/mill-valley>

If players are still stuck, consider the following one at a time until a connection is made:

- Start by comparing requirements of different plants against their provided conditions.
- List out possible suspects and then see which you can eliminate.
- Compare the soil chemistry results across all four beds. What do they have in common?
- Which soil measurements fall outside the preferred ranges listed in the plant requirement sheets?
- Notice which plants prefer low nitrogen and which prefer richer soil.
- The soil lab report mentions that salinity is “slightly elevated.” What effect can salt have on seeds?
- Look at what was added to the soil before planting. Could this have changed the soil conditions?
- Are environmental factors like temperature and moisture consistent with successful germination?
- If temperature and moisture were suitable, what other factors could prevent germination?
- Which soil properties affect how easily seeds absorb water?
- Did the same problem affect all beds equally, or were different plants affected in different ways?

Solution

(no need to print)

Why Gertie's Seeds Have Not Sprouted

The failure of Gertie's seeds to germinate was caused by changes in soil chemistry—specifically elevated salt levels combined with excessive nitrogen and improper pH conditions.

The soil lab report showed that all four beds had elevated salinity. Even though the increase was described as slight, salt has a powerful effect on seeds. Seeds must absorb water from the surrounding soil in order to begin germination. When salt levels are elevated, it becomes more difficult for seeds to absorb water. This weakens the seeds and slows or prevents germination.

This salt stress made the seeds more vulnerable to additional chemical problems already present in the soil. As Gertie lives relatively close to the ocean, the salt could have been introduced naturally.

Carrots and pea pods both require low nitrogen levels to germinate successfully. However, the soil analysis showed elevated nitrogen in all beds. Excess nitrogen can interfere with early root development and disrupt the delicate balance seeds need to begin growing.

Lettuce and Swiss chard faced a different problem. Their beds had higher-than-recommended pH levels, making the soil more alkaline than these plants prefer. High pH affects nutrient availability and further weakens the seeds, especially when they are already stressed by salinity.

Temperature and moisture were not responsible for the failure. Soil temperatures consistently fell within the acceptable germination ranges listed for all four crops. Gardening logs also confirmed consistent rainfall and proper soil drainage. Additionally, the soil report showed no harmful bacteria or fungal infections.

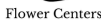
The most likely source of the nitrogen was the compost added before planting. It's great for many plants, but not if they need lower nitrogen levels.

Gertie can still have a successful season by planting crops better suited to the current conditions. She can plant her lettuce and Swiss chard in beds B and C. Beds A and D can grow crops that prefer a higher pH, such as asparagus or garlic (NOT in the same bed as these plants don't like each other). Regular deep watering can also help flush excess salt from the soil over time.

Next year, Gertie should avoid adding compost to beds intended for carrots or pea pods, and instead use lower-nutrient soil preparations. By matching plant needs to soil conditions, she can restore her garden's healthy growing cycle.

Are you ready for more? Don't miss the full Spring Unit Study! Use code **UNIT5** for \$5 off!

Flower Patterns



Use different colors to make the centers stand out.

Subjects Covered

to this unit study, your student has covered:

- Math: Cooking, Time, Puzzles, Games
- Science: Physics, Ecology, Evolution, Experiments, Vocabulary
- Botany
- Reading: Subject-Matter in Science, History, and Cultures, Suggested Reading
- Writing: Suggested Activities, Writing Prompts, Writing Assignments
- History: Spring Through the Ages, History of Holidays
- Geography: Holidays
- Art: Coloring Pages, Crafts
- P.E.: Science of Spring Activities

How To Use This Unit Study.
The Science of the Seasons
Activity.
Equinoxes and Solstices
Season of Spring
Season of Summer
Season of Autumn
Season of Winter

- Spring Activities in Plants
- Science of Spring Activities
- Science of Snow
- Effect of Snow on Ice on Soil Temperature
- Evolution and Adaptations
- Parts of a Plant
- What Plants Need to Survive
- Types of Plants
- Parts of a Flower
- Flowers
- Flower Puzzle
- Spring Through the Ages
- Spring Coloring Page
- Spring Holidays
- Spring Holidays
- List of Spring Holidays
- Spring Holidays Calendar
- Suggested Reading
- Recipes
- Individual Holidays
- Coloring Sheets
- Writing Prompts
- Crafts
- Games
- Vocabulary
- Science Experiment Pages
- Science Experiments Pages
- Subjects Covered
- Grading Rubrics
- Answer Keys



Sunflowers include dozens of species in the aster family. They are native to North America. Plants have large, often yellow **composite** flower heads, along with broad, mostly alternate leaves. Sunflowers are generally grown from seed and thrive in sunny locations. Young flower buds track the sun, while mature flowers usually face east. The seeds are edible. Sunflowers are often summer-flowering **annuals**.