

# Gardening Activities to Support Language and Communication Development



# Introduction to 'Gardening Activities to Support Language and Communication Development'

At the Talking House, we love being outside and know that for lots of children being able to move around is the best way to support their attention. This pack includes quick and easy activities to do outside with tips on how this can support your child's vocabulary and language development.

This pack has been developed by Leanne T (Clinical Lead – Schools) and Laura T (Senior speech and language therapist) who have a combined experience of over 20 years working with children to develop their speech, language and communication. We hope that you enjoy it.

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# Introduction to supporting language and communication through ‘water play’:

*“Being able to move around, explore the environment and do ‘hands on’ activities is an important way of learning.*

*If your child finds it difficult to sit and concentrate on board games and activities inside the house, then this pack will be perfect for you.*

*There are so many creative ways to play, interact and develop language outside and what better way to spend your weekend or school holidays than in the fresh air!”*

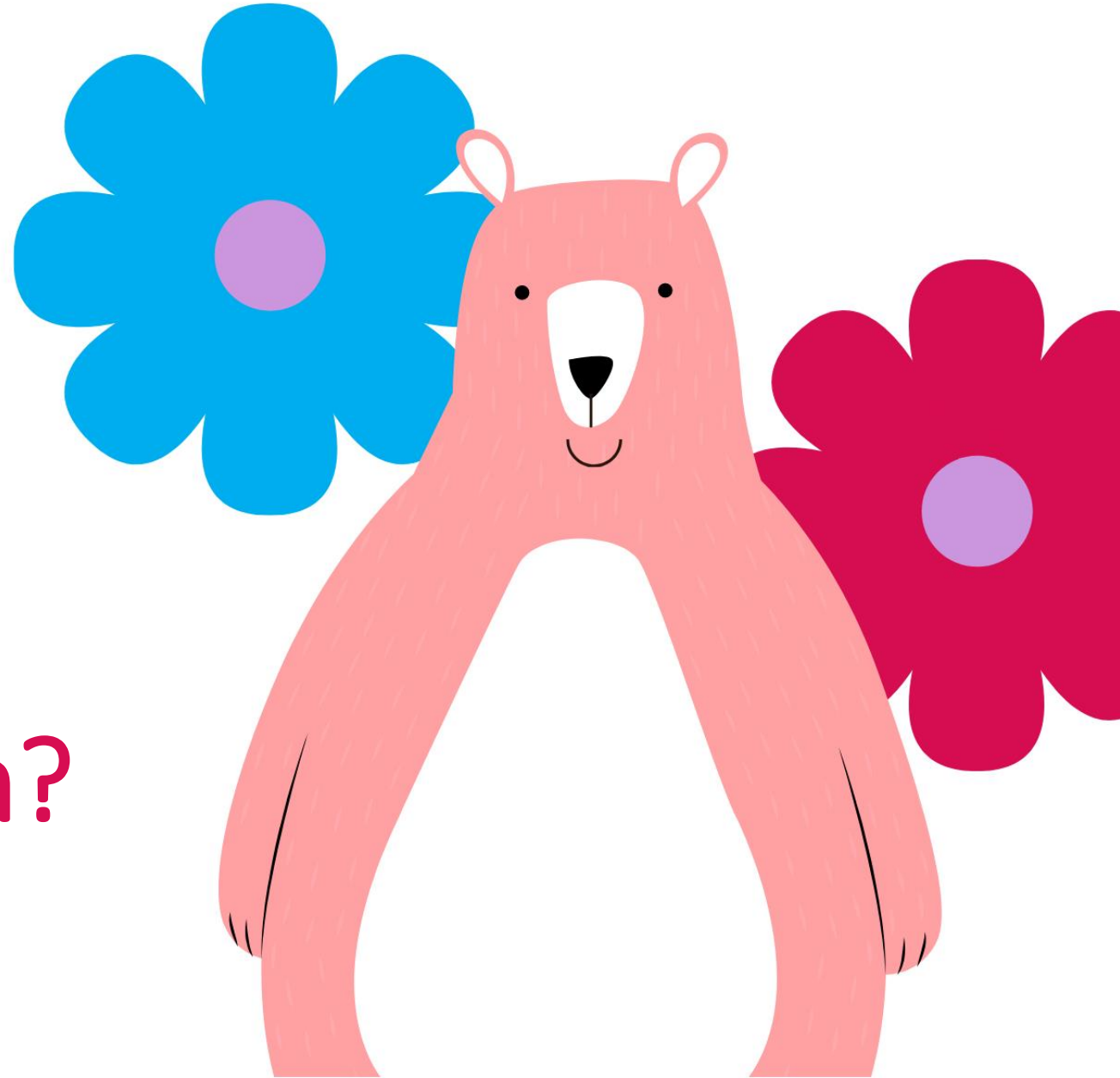
***Laura T (Senior Speech and Language Therapist)***

# Activities included in this pack:

- Digging, filling and pouring and transporting activities
- Activities with gardening equipment like spades, buckets, seeds, plants, watering cans
- Get creative outside
- Movement activities



How can gardening activities help to develop language and communication?



# In the garden: How can this develop language and communication?

## Learning new words:

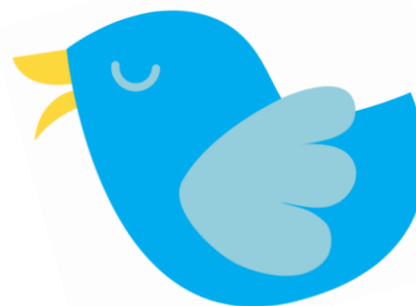
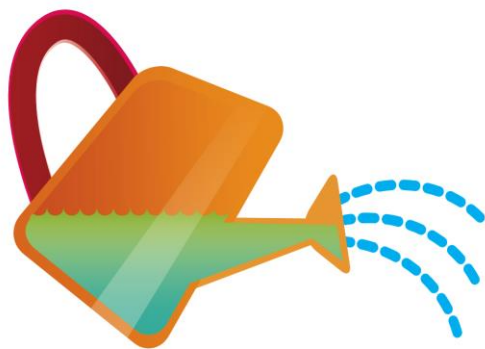
- Talk about and name the items that you are using in the garden with your child, such as 'spade,' 'that's a big bucket'.
- Use the key words in phrases and sentences for your child to hear in different contexts e.g. "Fill the big bucket with soil."
- Introduce concepts like big/small and prepositions like 'in/ on/ under' e.g. 'put the stones in the big bucket', 'put the leaves under the bush'.



# In the garden: How can this develop language and communication?

## Learning verbs (action words):

- Use action words to describe what your child is doing and what you can see happening around you.
- E.g. 'digging', 'pour the water', 'the bird is flying', 'kick the ball'.



# In the garden: How can this develop language and communication?

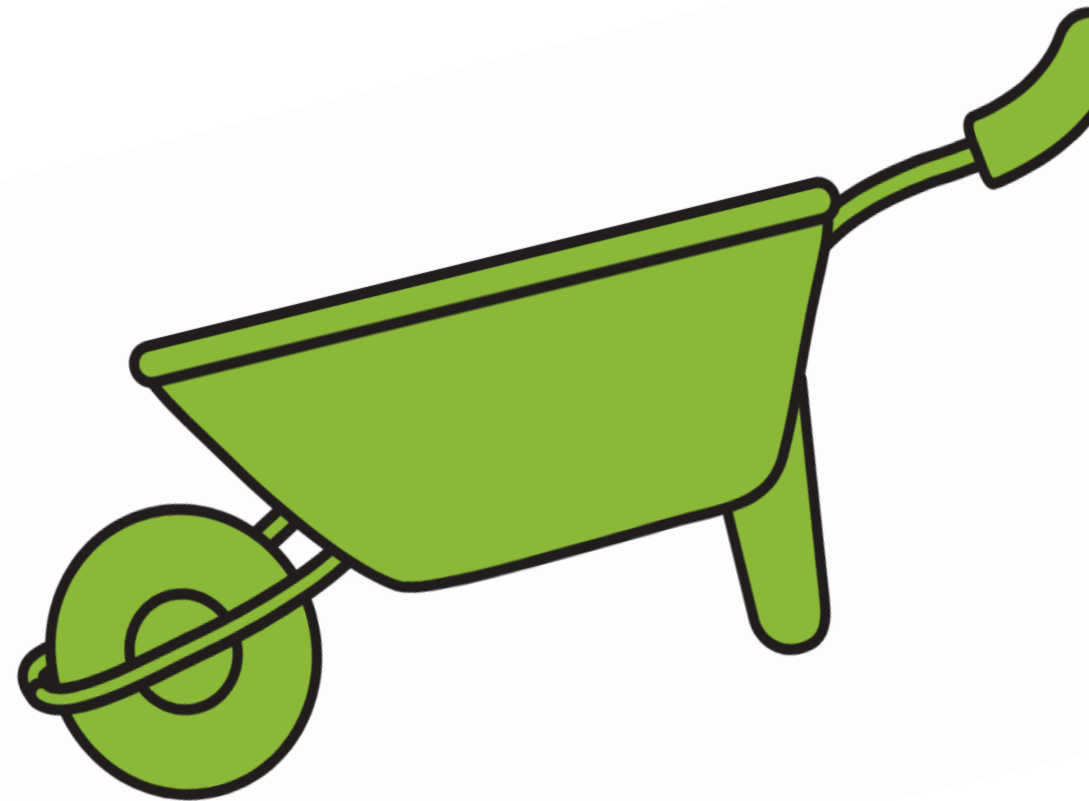
## Social interaction:

- Create interactive games such as 'chase' or turn-taking games such as ball games to kick/ throw/ roll a ball between one another.
- Create anticipation in games such as chase, pouring water from a watering can or jumping together on a trampoline by using your body language, facial expression and phrases like 'ready.....steady.....go!' before you run/ pour/ jump.





Digging, filling,  
pouring and  
transporting activities



# Digging, filling, pouring and transporting : What can I use and how?

## Activity 1:

- Encourage your child to dig using different equipment and label the items as they do this
  - E.g. 'spade', 'green fork', 'little scoop'.
- Transport mud into piles or containers – you can do this by filling a bucket before emptying it somewhere else.
- Turn this into a joint game by you filling up the bucket and handing it to your child for them to take and empty before bringing it back.



# Digging, filling, pouring and transporting : What can I use and how?

## Activity 2:

- Make mud pies and castles by filling bowls and buckets to turn over and tap.
- Model language as you do this such as: 'bucket', 'fill the bucket', 'tap the bucket'.
- Use exaggerated facial expression to gain your child's attention and share enjoyment of the activity with them e.g. 'wow! A big pie!'.



# Digging, filling, pouring and transporting : What can I use and how?

## Activity 3:

- Create your own mud kitchen using toy pots and pans, buckets and spades, spoons or sticks.
- Encourage your child to make mud pies by collecting mud, water, leaves etc and experimenting with stirring them together.
- Use language like: 'water, 'more water', 'add a leaf', 'stir the mud and the leaves together'.



# Digging, filling, pouring and transporting : What can I use and how?

## Activity 4:

- Collect different items from around your garden to transport in a wheelbarrow or bucket.
- You could allow your child to take the lead on this or give them specific instructions
  - E.g. 'find a leaf, a stone and a daisy', 'tip out the mud', 'put the leaves under the bush'.



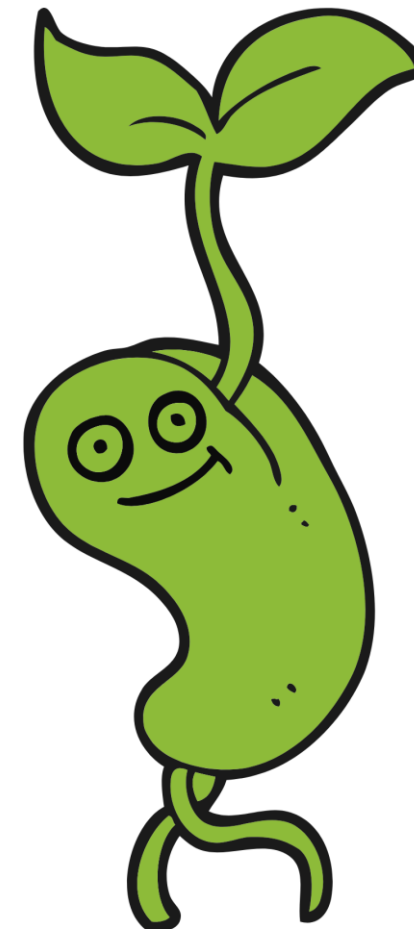
Activities with gardening  
equipment (spades,  
buckets, seeds, plants,  
watering cans)



# Gardening equipment: What can I use and how?

## Activity 1:

- Encourage your child to help with simple gardening tasks.
- They could:
  - Rake the grass/ sweep paving stones
  - Digs holes for you or your child to fill
  - Plant packets of seeds, plants or flowers
  - Fill up the watering can and water the plants
  - Draw pictures of seeds they have planted to have home-made garden markers.
  - Put on gloves and pull out the weeds

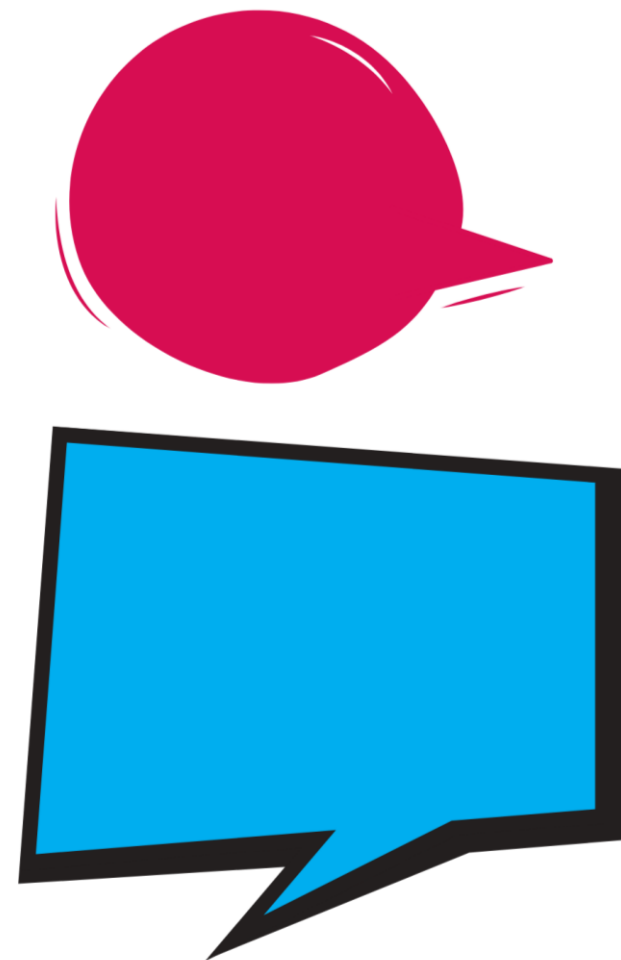


# Gardening equipment: What can I use and how?

## Activity 1 cont.:

- Model language alongside these activities or give instructions for your child to follow:
  - ‘mud’, ‘dig the mud’, ‘dig a hole in the mud’
  - ‘seeds’, ‘open the seeds’, ‘open the packet and tip the seeds into the hole’
  - ‘water’, ‘pour the water’, ‘fill up the watering can and water the pink flowers’
  - ‘pull’, ‘pull out the weeds’, ‘pull out the weeds and put them in the red bucket’

*Our speech and language therapists can provide more visual sequences for you child to follow if you would like them. Just let us know!*





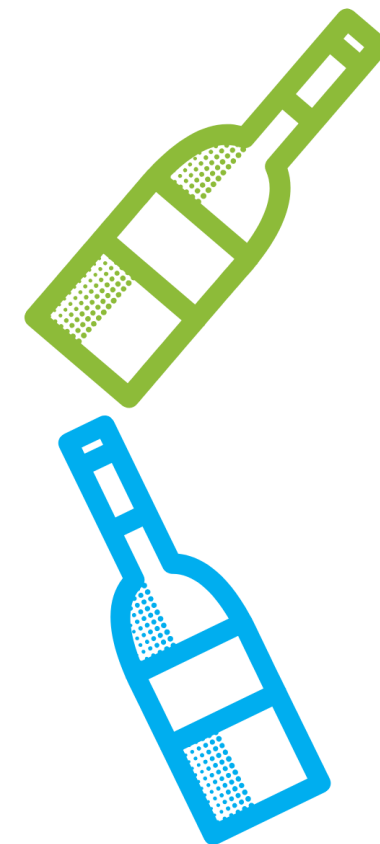
Get creative outside!



# Get creative outside: What can I use and how?

## Activity 1: Water wall

- Create a 'water wall' using old bottles from your recycling and cut holes in the bottom. Use tape/ string to attach bottles of different sizes together against a fence or wall.
- Encourage your child to help with the building process and then the fun can begin!
- Use more containers or watering cans to experiment with pouring water down the different shoots you've created and watch it run through. Place buckets at the bottom to catch the water and start again!



# Get creative outside: What can I use and how?

## Activity 2: Music corner

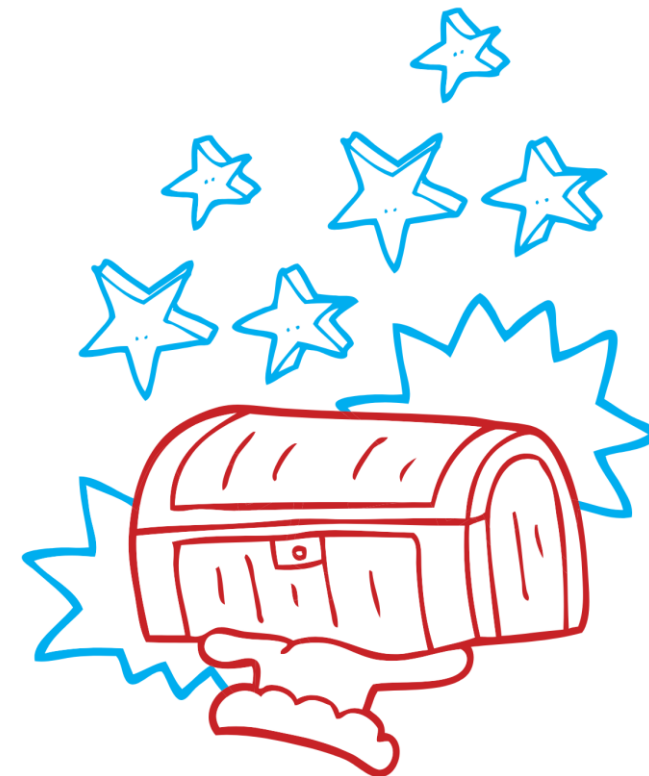
- Create a music corner with old pots, pans, plant pots, wooden spoons, sticks and anything that can make noise!
- Encourage your child to:
  - Fill up old bottles with stones to shake like maracas
  - Turn pots and buckets upside down to tap with different items like sticks or spoons - encourage your child to listen to the different sounds they make
  - Run a stick along the different items or a fence to hear the sounds it creates.
- Model language linked to the items, actions and concepts e.g. 'pan', 'tap the pan', 'loud!...quiet', 'fast!....slow', 'shake the bottle fast!', 'tap the pan quietly'.



# Get creative outside: What can I use and how?

## Activity 3: Treasure hunt

- Hide toys or pictures around the garden and encourage your child to find them.
- Reverse roles for them to hide things for you or siblings to find.
- For older children, encourage them to draw a treasure map with footsteps leading to the items or write clues of how to find the toys.
- Help your child to learn concepts like position words whilst they're finding treasure e.g. 'look under the tree', 'it's next to the plant pot', 'try looking behind the bucket'

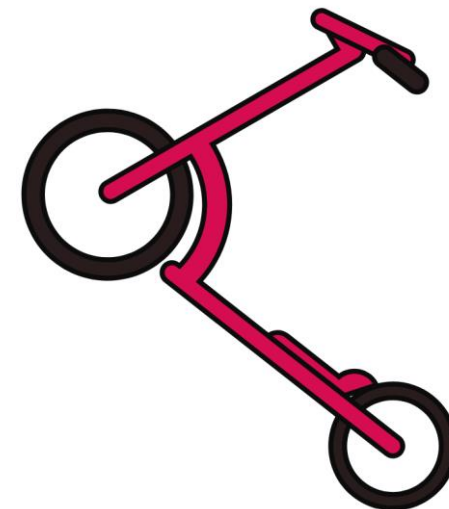


# 'Movement' activities



# Movement activities: What can I use and how?

- The following activities can be used to develop language, communication and interaction:
  - Swings
  - Slides
  - Trampoline
  - Scooter/ bike/ trike/ push along cars
  - Chase/ tickle/ rough and tumble games requiring no equipment



# Movement activities: What can I use and how?

## Tip 1: Facial expressions

- Encourage your child to look towards you – share enjoyment of the interaction by smiling, use exaggerate facial expression to hold your child's attention and encourage them imitate you.
- Taking turns to copy each others facial expression, sounds and actions is important in overall communication and conversation skills.



# Movement activities: What can I use and how?

## Tip 2: Getting focus/attention

- Encourage your child to stop and listen to what you are saying.
- This might be you building anticipation of chasing or tickling them with 'ready...steady...go!' or you might give instructions for them to follow like 'jump', 'run', 'climb up the steps'





# Movement activities: Encouraging communication skills

## Tip 3: Model language

- Model language for your child and leave pauses for them to fill in the gaps – they might use eye contact, a noise or a gesture to indicate for you to push them again on the swing and this is great!
- Model back a word for them to learn what this means and how/when they can use the word themselves.
- For example, hold the swing in the air and pause whilst looking at your child before saying 'go!' / 'swing' / 'again' / 'more'.



# Movement activities: Encouraging communication skills

## Tip 4: Model language

- If your child uses symbols to communicate, contact your therapist for any symbols that you might need.
- Create opportunities for your child to request actions or items with their symbols.
- For example, 'slide', 'push', 'more', 'mummy push bike', 'daddy chase'.



We hope that you find  
this resource useful

Any questions:

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