



Spring Into Planting: Growing Green in Sevier County

Grade Level: 3–4

Time Required: 60 minutes

Subject Areas: Science, Environmental Education, Civic Responsibility

Lesson Synopsis

Students explore why spring is an important planting season and how plants help protect soil, water, wildlife, and community spaces in Sevier County. Through discussion and a hands-on planting activity, students examine how plant roots prevent erosion, support pollinators, and improve environmental quality.

This lesson is important because Sevier County experiences heavy rainfall and hillside erosion. Planting trees and native flowers help reduce soil loss, protect waterways, and maintain the natural beauty that supports tourism and community pride. Students learn that planting is an act of environmental stewardship.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define germination, erosion, pollinator, and native plant.
2. Identify the five basic needs of plants.
3. Explain how plant roots help prevent soil erosion.
4. Describe how planting benefits pollinators and local wildlife.
5. Demonstrate proper seed planting technique.

Tennessee Standards Alignment

3rd Grade

3.LS3.1 – Explain how environments influence plant growth.

3.ESS2.1 – Explain how weather and water affect Earth’s surface.

4th Grade

4.LS2.2 – Explain how organisms interact within ecosystems.

4.ESS2.1 – Analyze how weathering and erosion change Earth’s surface.

Background Information for Instructor

Spring planting is ideal because:

- Soil temperatures rise, supporting germination.
- Increased rainfall provides water for young plants.
- Longer daylight hours increase photosynthesis.
- Risk of frost decreases.

In Sevier County, rainfall combined with mountainous terrain increases the risk of erosion. When soil is left bare, rainwater can wash sediment into streams and rivers. Plant roots act like anchors, holding soil in place and reducing runoff.

Plants also:

- Provide nectar and pollen for bees and butterflies.

- Improve air quality.
- Add shade and cooling.
- Beautify neighborhoods and parks.

Teaching students early about planting builds lifelong stewardship habits.

Key Vocabulary

Native plant – A plant that naturally grows in a specific region.

Pollinator – An animal that helps plants reproduce (such as bees or butterflies).

Erosion – The movement of soil by wind or water.

Germination – When a seed begins to grow.

Photosynthesis – The process plants use sunlight to make food.

Environment – The natural world around us.

Why This Matters in Sevier County

- Sevier County receives heavy rainfall that can cause erosion.
- Hillsides and developed areas are vulnerable to soil loss.
- Pollinators are essential to gardens, farms, and native plants.
- Beautiful landscapes support tourism and community pride.
- Planting protects waterways that flow through the Smoky Mountains region.

Students learn that planting helps keep Sevier County beautiful and environmentally healthy.

Lesson Procedure

1. Hook (10 minutes)

Display two images:

- A bare patch of dirt after heavy rain
- A grassy or flower-covered hillside

Think–Pair–Share Questions:

- What differences do you notice?
- Which area would lose more soil in a rainstorm?
- Why do roots matter?

Guide students toward recognizing that plants prevent erosion.

2. Vocabulary Discussion (5–7 minutes)

Introduce key terms and ask:

How do these words connect to the pictures we observed?

Encourage complete-sentence responses using vocabulary.

3. Mini-Lesson: Why Spring? (10–15 minutes)

Discuss:

- What plants need to grow
- Why spring weather supports growth
- How roots protect soil

Ask:

- Why don't farmers plant in winter?
- What happens to soil when rain hits bare ground?

4. Hands-On Planting Activity (20 minutes)

Students plant seeds in cups or participate in outdoor planting.

Steps:

1. Prepare soil.

2. Dig a small hole.
3. Place seed at correct depth.
4. Cover gently.
5. Water lightly.

Discuss how this small action contributes to larger environmental health.

5. Debrief (5–7 minutes) Discussion Questions:

- How do plant roots help during storms?
- Why are pollinators important?
- How does planting improve our community?
- What might happen if no one planted trees or flowers?

Connect discussion back to Sevier County's hills, streams, and tourism.

Exit Ticket (5 minutes)

Students complete:

1. List three things plants need to grow.
2. Define erosion.
3. Explain one way planting helps Sevier County.

Informal Assessment

- Participation in discussion
- Accuracy of vocabulary usage
- Proper planting technique

Optional Formal Assessment

Short written explanation:

How does planting protect soil and water in Sevier County?