

Beans and Seeds

Beans and seeds are a much-loved sensory resource. Coming as they do in a variety of sizes, colours and shapes, they are smooth and shiny with similar flowing qualities to rice. Cheap and easy to source, these simple 'foods' can give hours of fun and tactile enjoyment to participants, support workers and carers alike. They can reinforce a theme or simply be enjoyed in an abstract context for their tactile, visual and sound qualities. Be selective in what you purchase; separate colours/sizes are useful for sorting, large quantities have a more striking effect when poured and enable all participants to explore at the same time. Use bowls and trays to make the activities accessible to wheelchair users.

Ways of using beans/seeds:

- Feeling with fingers and toes, burying, picking up individual beans or handfuls, watching them run through fingers.
- Sorting into colours, shapes, sizes and textures.
- Making patterns and pathways - using a black cloth on the floor helps contain the beans and shows up their different colours.
- Creating a floor map or geometrical shapes using different colours and sizes.
- Dropping into, rolling around or shaking in a variety of containers, made of wood, metal or plastic, creates different sounds. Provide some large containers such as a fire pit bowl, as many people enjoy pouring from a great height and this will help contain the beans.
- Using with instruments - dropping beans onto a tongue drum will produce different sounds to when they are sprinkled over a dulcimer. Tambours make excellent receptacles for rolling beans around in to create whooshing sounds.
- Putting into clear plastic tubs or bottles to make see-through instruments that can be rolled or shaken. Different sized beans will create different sounds.
- Linking to a theme to enrich the multisensory experience, for example using bird seeds with a bird theme, a variety of beans for Zulus making dinner, grains to go with grasses, harvest, planting or Spring, or orange lentils to reinforce a colour theme.

Although using beans and seeds can be a bit messy, it is well worth it for the motivation it provides, encouraging participation by all. Obviously discourage eating, but most beans are not considered harmful with a slight caveat for kidney beans.

Links

Rice (prop)
Feasting (Activity)

Workshops - Lady of Shalott, Cabin

Videos
Seeds and Bowls
Bean Stew