

Classroom Activity

10 Big Question: How will we conserve species diversity?

Seed Germination (How soil seed banks differ)

You will need:

- Plastic or foil containers (takeaway size ideal)
- Sheet of paper towel
- Old pasta sauce jar (~700 mL)
- Soil

At home: Each student will need to collect some soil in an old pasta sauce jar. Ask students to bring soil from home or go for a walk with a parent and collect soil from their local area.

At school: Poke a few small holes in the bottom of a takeaway container to allow any water to drain. Place a sheet of paper towel in the bottom of the container to ensure no soil runs out of the holes. Pour the soil collected from home into the container and spread evenly. Water the soil well and place containers in a warm sunny area to promote seed germination. Continue to water soil well every couple of days and see what grows!

Compare your results with the rest of the class. How many plants grew in each container? How many different types of plants grew in each container (can you tell if some are the same species)? Can you identify any of the plants (are some common weeds or are there any native plants)? Did some plants emerge much faster than others (different species, weed or native)? Are there differences in plants emerging from soil collected in different areas (west of school compared with east)?

This classroom activity was suggested by Alexandra Bowman, PhD student with the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Adelaide.