

Growing Your Own “Magic Beanstalk”

By Melissa Pilgrim

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Just like Jack, your little ones can use special “magic beans” and their imaginations to create their own “Magic Beanstalk” full of wishes (and no scary giant need ever show up!). And even better, doing this fun, simple art growing project with young children between the ages of 3 and 8 will help teach them the joys of both gardening and being creative at the same time.

Supplies Needed:

1 Large Pot or Container

Colored Paints and Brushes (make sure paints are both waterproof and safe for kids to use)

Various Sizes of Rocks (both big and small—enough large ones to fill the bottom of your container and 6 smaller ones for the top of it)

Planting Soil

3 Long Sticks (about 3 feet each)

“Magic Bean Seeds” (enough to allow plenty of room to grow depending on the size of your container)

Watering Can

Special Wishes

Steps:

1. Decorate the pot/container with the colored paints.
2. While your pot/container is drying, go on a nature walk to gather various sizes of rocks (enough large ones to fill the bottom of your container and 6 smaller, colorful ones for the top later on) and 3 long sticks (about 3 feet long each).
 - Be sure to only pick-up sticks from the ground—for the trees no longer need these ones—and take off any leaves.
 - Be careful that no bugs become “hitch-hikers” on either the rocks or sticks. (They can stay behind in nature for this project!)
3. After your nature walk, go back to check on your pot/container to see if it is dry (it should be completely dry before continuing).
4. Decide where you will keep your Magic Beanstalk, being sure to remember it will need:
 - Lots of sunlight to grow up high.
 - Daily care (so you want to be sure it’s close to where you can visit it every day easily).
5. Once you’ve found your perfect place and the pot/container is completely dry, place the pot where you want it and put several big rocks in the bottom of it for good drainage. (You can also use a pot with holes in the bottom of it already for drainage, but if doing so make sure you have something that can catch the water if it drains out from it—otherwise, you could get a leaky mess!)
6. Fill the pot/container with planting soil until it’s about 2 inches from the top.
7. Starting a little off from the center and towards the back of the pot/container (but not directly against the side of it; leave at least a couple of inches from the side), push one of the sticks down about 6 inches into the planting soil. Take the next stick and do the same with it, spacing it off a

couple of inches to the right of the first one. Do the same with the third stick, spacing it off a couple of inches towards the left of the middle one so they are all in a row.

8. Press the soil down around each stick so that they all stand up firmly, then place two of the small, colorful rocks on both sides of each stick, helping them to stand up even more (this will also help them stand up in windy conditions too!).

9. Now take your “magic bean seeds” and—before planting them into their new, special home—make a wish for what you hope will happen as they grow!

10. Push each bean seed, one by one, into the soil in front of the sticks and rocks, spreading them out evenly across your whole pot/container. Do not use too many for your pot/container’s size and do not push them too far into the ground (about one inch is enough).

11. Use your watering can to water the seeds in your pot/container (be careful not to overwater them! Soil should be moist, not muddy).

12. Enjoy your Magic Beanstalk as you water it and pick out any weeds that shouldn’t be growing along with your beans every day. If you’d like, you can even sing to it—for Magic Beanstalks LOVE to be sung to!

13. In about 3 weeks you can enjoy your first harvest, and after you pick those first delicious vegetables be sure to make another wish and see what comes true before your next batch of beans grows! Do this each time you pick your beans, for your Magic Beanstalk will keep delivering wishes along with tasty beans for several months!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Melissa Pilgrim is a freelance writer and the author of *Animal Motions*, an interactive children’s picture book and app which she created to help children use their imaginations and stay active in a fun way. She’s had 16 plays produced, 4 screenplays optioned, and 1 TV series optioned. She was the artistic director of The Sheil Park Theatre in Chicago for 5 years where she produced 22 shows for children, teens, and adults. To learn more, visit her websites www.YourWritingMuse.com and www.AnimalMotions.com.