

Letters to David: Plant or Animal? Instructions and Answers

- Venue: Australian Garden, South American Garden – Flower Dome (indoors)
- Estimated duration to complete all the activities: 30 minutes (excluding welcome and briefing)

Age Range / Subject

- 4 – 9 years old (Science): Conservation and Plant Diversity

Learning Objectives:

- Understand what a living thing is and know the difference between living and non-living things
- Know what a plant is, including the parts of plants and their functions
- Learn about interesting animal-themed plants
- Develop investigative and problem-solving skills

About Letters to David: Plant or Animal?

Letters to David is a series of online children's activities which visitors can download for free, for their visit to Gardens by the Bay.

Each activity sheet features a different set of correspondences between David, the Botanist, and his friends around the world. Within each letter, is something interesting for your children to do in a different part of Gardens by the Bay.

Letters to David: Plant or Animal? introduces two of the animal-themed plants at the [Australian Garden](#) and [South American Garden](#) in the Flower Dome. Through the exchange between David, and his friend, Anton, the children will learn about the fascinating stories behind these animal-themed plants.

Welcome and Briefing (10 min)

Upon arrival, allow the children to adjust to the new surroundings. Give a quick list of instructions to the children:

- Do not run or push your friends as you walk in the gardens
- Do not touch any plants unless instructed
- Whatever you bring to the gardens, bring them back with you; whatever you find in the gardens, leave them in the gardens
- Raise your hand if you wish to speak or answer any questions
- Let your teachers know if you feel unwell

Give the children time to visit the toilet. Once ready, take the children to the [Australian Garden](#) and [South American Garden](#) in the Flower Dome.

Suggested Plan for Page 1 (10 min)

At the [Australian Garden](#), ask the children to look for a plant with flowers that look like an animal's paw. If needed, particularly for younger children, use the image on the activity sheet as a reference, or hint to them that the flowers are red and yellow.



Once they have located the flowers, use the information in Anton's letter to tell the children about the Kangaroo's Paw.

If time and resources permit, seat the children in the enclosed area of the **Australian Garden** and let them colour the picture in the activity sheet.

Proceed to the **South American Garden** when you are done.

Suggested Plan for Page 2 (15 min)

Take the children to one of the Monkey Puzzle trees in the **South American Garden** where they can get a better look at the tree. Ask them if the shape of the tree reminds them of anything. Many of them would have observed that it looks similar to a Christmas tree. Tell the children that the Monkey Puzzle tree is a "conifer", the same type of tree that people use for "live" Christmas trees.

Ask the children to observe the tree and to guess if the leaves are sharp to the touch. (They are!) Next, ask if they think it is possible for a monkey to climb this tree. (No, because they would get pricked and poked.) Explain that this is why the tree is called a "Monkey Puzzle tree" - because it would puzzle a monkey to try and climb it.

For older children, allow them to complete the maze puzzle in the activity sheet if there is time.

Answer:



Conclusion (5 min)

Ask the children if they can think of any other plants that remind them of animals. One example may be a cactus which could resemble a porcupine or sea urchin, or like the Rat Tail cactus in our **Succulent Garden** which looks a bit like an octopus! If you are visiting other parts of the Gardens, you may ask the children to point out any such plants and explain why they think the plants remind them of animals.

Note to Educator:

- The above is a suggested plan. Please feel free to adjust the duration and complexity of the activities to suit the needs of your children.
- For the Monkey Puzzle tree portion, you may need to define the verb "puzzle" for younger children.