

## 5 ways to explore...

# Tiny containers

Small receptacles provide a plethora of opportunities, says **Julie Mountain**

**F**or children with strong urges to collect, contain or envelop, an abundance of tiny containers is a great way to get them moving and thinking outdoors. Try to collect as many different types of container as you can.



### MINI-GEOCACHING

If you often travel beyond your setting, why not create and hide geocaches for other treasure-hunters to find? Geocaching is hi-tech treasure hunting, using clues on apps such as [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com), and the geocaches are small, water-tight containers holding a tiny object plus a piece of paper for geocachers to add their name and the date to.

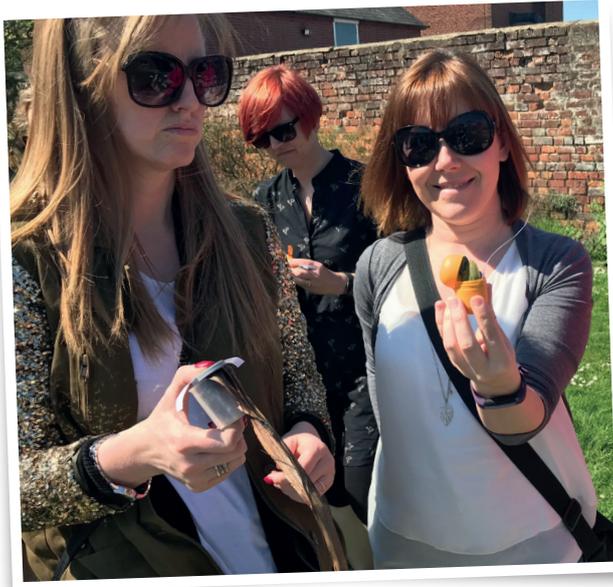
Give each child one of your tiny containers, and choose an object from the setting to place into each. Add a compliment slip or business card from your setting and find sneaky places to hide them on your route. You don't have to add your geocaches to the app, but if you do it will allow other geocachers to search for them, adding their details to your note if they are successful.



### COLLECTIONS

Work alongside your children to curate tiny collections – a set of mini glass jam jars is perfect for creating a Lilliputian collection. Discuss the characteristics of objects that will fit inside, introducing as many synonyms for 'tiny' as you can. Then scavenge across the setting for contents such as minuscule pinecones, pinches of sand, buttons, lavender heads, beads, multilink cubes, small-world animals, dolls' house furniture or shells.

The pictures in the book *Gulliver's Travels: Voyage to Lilliput* (Candlewick Press, 2017) will inspire children to imagine



themselves as giants and build their own stories using the tiny objects in their collection. With very young children, you might like to glue the lids of the tiny containers closed.



### MESSY PLAY

Mud lab and water play vessels tend to be large, but tiny

containers have a role to play too. A variety of petite bottles and pots in the mud lab/kitchen will support unique and divergent types of play, providing a focus for small hand movements in addition to the brilliant whole-body effort required by buckets and saucepans.

Small, tricky-to-handle items such as pipettes, droppers and medicine syringes, which require skilled fine motor movements, are a super addition to a mud lab. Beautiful miniature glass bottles with stoppers are the perfect way to store potions.



### TINY STEM

Tiny containers are valuable STEM resources. Use your collection to discuss size, volume, capacity, shape, colour, pattern and

**The containers can be anything from shot 'glasses' to Kinder egg toy holders**



weight; talk about what the containers were made for, and where the contents have gone; what are the containers made from (lots of them will be plastic – why?). Take a range outdoors to explore number:

- Ask children to arrange the containers in size order.
- Use a permanent marker to write a number on each container, from zero; if you can fit them on the container, add dots to aid recognition.
- Provide each child with a container and ask them to find the corresponding number of items, which must fit inside. They might choose leaves, petals, pieces of gravel, acorns, conkers, stalks of grass...
- Compare the found treasure, examining the relative size of the objects, counting the total number and so on. Remember to include 'zero' and its synonyms (e.g. empty, nothing, none, nil) in your discussions.



### LETTERS AND SOUNDS

Collect 30-plus tiny containers or a toolbox

with lots of compartments. Label each with a letter or a grapheme and into each place one or more tiny objects that include that sound in their name. Speech therapists sometimes use this as a game to help children who struggle to articulate a sound to practise it.

### And another thing...

It will take a while to create a tiny container collection, so ask parents to start collecting on your behalf. Ask for: mini jam jars (the sort that hotels and B&Bs use); 35mm film canisters and slide holders; Tic-Tac boxes; contact lens cases; mini Clip-Lok tubs; travel-sized cosmetic pots and tubs; Kinder egg toy containers; plastic shot 'glasses'; pill/tablet dispensers; miniature plant pots... ■