

Garden Mice Math Mystery

Farmer Garth loved to work in the garden, but one week in spring he came down with a terrible cold and had to stay inside the office all day. He kept his binoculars on his desk, though, and picked them up from time to time to gaze out at the garden. One day he spotted three mice scuttling along the garden path by the gourd tunnel. They were so cute with their long noses and big pink ears. Farmer Garth sighed, wishing he could be out in the garden and then went back to work.

Later that day, as he scanned the garden with his binoculars again he suddenly realized that there were lots of seeds missing from the big sunflower. In fact, if he squinted hard he could count nine rows missing! What a shock! Just the day before it had been full with ripening seeds to share with students. He decided that he would have to keep an eye on this new development in the garden.

The following morning Farmer Garth sat sipping his tea before his work day and once again using his binoculars to observe the garden. And there, trotting across his vision, were not three, but five mice! He quickly turned to check the sunflower, but no, no more seeds were missing. Feeling more relaxed, Farmer Garth turned back to his work. He had so much to do that day to get ready for the next wave of school field trips, he forgot all about the garden until right before it was time to leave. He took a quick peek at

the garden. He noticed it right away. Fifteen more rows were missing. Fifteen! Why soon there wouldn't be any sunflower seeds left for the kids. Farmer Garth loved mice, but he was beginning to suspect that they had something to do with this sudden disappearance of the seeds.

On the third day Farmer Garth had an important meeting with the other Hidden Villa teachers, but he decided to take a quick look through his binoculars before the meeting started. First he noticed the hummingbird buzzing above the flowers. Then he noticed that the grape vine was finally sprouting some nice big leafs to provide kids shade in the summer. And then - no, it couldn't be! But it was. There, waltzing down the path was not three, not five, but no less than nine mice all in a little line! Farmer Garth didn't have time to worry about the garden now, he was already late for his meeting. But he was worried about what kind of damage he might find in the garden late this afternoon. He finally felt over his cold and thought he'd go check it out himself after his meeting.

How many missing rows of sunflower seeds do you think Farmer Garth will find this afternoon?