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## Lesson 1: Design Your Own Garden

### Objectives

Students will:

- learn about gardens and the importance of plants.
- discover how they can use garden design as a form of personal expression.
- create their own garden plans.

**Standards Addressed:** [click here](#)

### Central Concepts

- Gardens are human-made creations that simulate/manipulate nature.
- Gardens are comprised of diverse components and can be any size or shape.
- Gardens mean different things to different people.

### Materials

- graph paper and blank paper
- pencils, colored pencils, crayons
- seed and plant catalogs
- old gardening magazines or garden books

### Discussion Topics

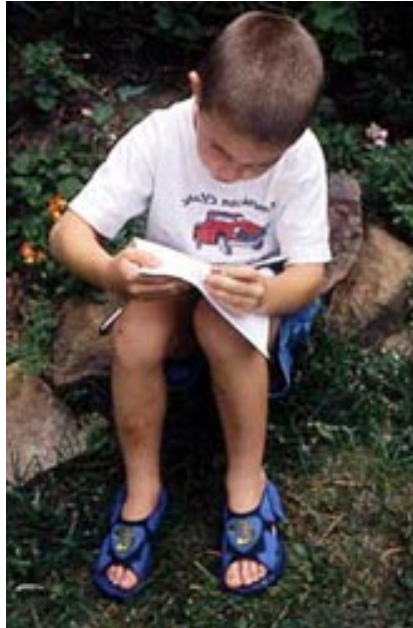
- *Why are plants important to us?* Plants provide us with the air we breathe, the food we eat, shelter, and clothing. In addition to providing our basic habitat needs, they also beautify our landscapes.
- *What is a garden? What are some common things that gardens include?* A garden is a space created by people that imitates a natural setting. While it may look natural, it's been influenced by human intervention. Common garden elements include plants, ponds, stepping stones, arbors or trellises, birdbaths and feeders, statues and sculptures. Gardens are often enclosed by fences.
- *Why do people garden?* To produce food, to relax, to get physical exercise, to beautify their home or community, as a way to socialize with friends and family, and to express their creativity.
- *Do you know anyone who gardens? Why do they garden? For health, relaxation, beauty, nutritious food?*
- *How big is a garden?* Gardens can be any size. A container garden may be as small as a 6-inch clay pot on a patio, and a large public garden may occupy hundreds of acres of land.

### Activity

1. Lead a class discussion on gardens using the questions above. Remind students that gardens can be any size and shape, and include both plant and non-plant elements.
2. Schedule time for students to look through garden magazines and books for representations of different kinds of gardens.
3. Give each student an old seed or nursery catalog to use as a reference and ask them to design their own garden.

Older students can create an aerial-view landscape design on a piece of graph paper. Explain how to use the blocks on the graph paper to scale their ideas. Have them refer to catalogs for inspiration, and to pay attention to the size of plants in the catalog descriptions.

Younger students can draw their garden plan on a piece of blank paper using colored pencils or crayons. It will be easier for them to draw from a two-dimensional, front view perspective. They can also use catalogs for plant ideas.



June 2006  
Kids Garden News

### Contents

**Lesson Feature:**  
**Designing a Youth Garden**

[Introduction](#)

[Background Information](#)

[Lesson 1:](#)  
[Design Your Own Garden](#)

[Lesson 2:](#)  
[The Benefits of Native Plants](#)

[Program Spotlight:](#)  
[Organic Valley Adopts a School Garden](#)

[News Items:](#)  
[Free classroom resources, funding opportunities, more](#)

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In addition to plants, encourage students to incorporate pathways, water features, seating, and other items (e.g., fences, sheds, composters) into their plan. As they work on their design, ask them to think about what they are trying to say through their garden or what their garden says about them.

4. After the students finish their plans, encourage them to share with the class, describing the components and explaining the message they hope to convey with the design. Display completed designs for all to enjoy.

If you wish, borrow a site plan from a local landscape designer to show students after they have finished their sketches. Discuss various elements in their designs and those in the professional sketch. Ask, *What is significant about each? What role these elements play in the creation of a garden?* For example, professional designs are actual plans that landscapers can use like blueprints to build a garden, whereas students' designs may be more decorative, imaginative, and freeform – and that's just fine! (Most landscape designers started out making the same sorts of drawings!)

## Extensions

**Science:** Plan a trip to a local botanical garden or arboretum. To find one close to you, visit the [American Public Gardens Association Web site](#). Check to see if guided or self-guided tours are available. Many gardens also provide pre- and post- visit activities.

**Math:** Plan a garden at your school or in the community. Take measurements of prospective garden spaces using a tape measure and then plot the measurements using an appropriate scale on a piece of graph paper. Add plants and other garden features to the plan using the same scale and recommended plant spacing.

**English:** Read [Seedfolks](#) by Paul Fleischman. Discuss the reasons that each of the characters participates in the community garden, and the different kinds of gardens they create.

**History:** Information about famous gardens, from the Hanging Gardens of Babylon to the famous French Gardens of Versailles, is available in history books and online. The campaign for Victory Gardens was an important aspect of American history from the World War II era. See [Unearthing History in the Victory Garden](#) for background and curriculum ideas.

**Art:** Texture, color, line, form, and scale are the basic elements of design. After students have completed their first drafts of designs, introduce and discuss the significance of these basic elements in a landscape. Students can then incorporate them into their second draft designs. For more details download [Basic Principles of Landscape Design](#).

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