

April 2007: 30 Days of Green

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

April is National Garden Month® — When you garden, you GROW!

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April 18

A Perennial Marks the Spot

Make a time capsule and let students create their own buried treasure!

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background Creating a time capsule is exciting for students — they become engaged in searching for objects and symbols that represent what's important in their lives. And it's like burying treasure! Defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "a container used to store for posterity a selection of objects thought to be representative of life at a particular time," opening the capsule after a month, a year, or longer provides an opportunity to reflect on the past and compare it to the present.

It's important to put the capsule in a place where no one will be able to open until the agreed-upon time so many people opt to bury theirs in the ground. But how do you make sure you can find it later? One option is to place an object over the spot, such as a rock or stake, but what happens if some one moves it? According to the International Time Capsule Society, buried time capsules often lost for this very reason. To avoid this problem, why not mark the spot with a plant whose roots will keep it anchored in place?

Choosing Plants to Mark the Spot

Plants can be sorted into three categories based on their life cycles. Understanding the distinctions will help students choose the plant or plants to mark the site of their time capsule.

Annuals complete their life cycle during one growing season and then die after they produce seeds. Annuals are further described as "cool-season" or "warm-season" depending on the time of the year they grow. Common cool-season annuals include snapdragons, lettuce, and cabbage. Common warm-season annuals include sunflowers, tomatoes, and zinnias.

Biennials live for two growing seasons (usually one warm and one cool growing season). The first season they store energy; in the second season, they produce seeds and die. Common examples include carrots, foxgloves, and parsley.

Perennials are plants whose life cycle is longer than two growing seasons. We divide them into three categories:

activity

Make a Time Capsule

Create a time capsule with your class.

Start by collecting materials. You can ask each student to bring in an object that represents something special to them or brainstorm as a group to identify items that represent the times, such as a class picture, current newspaper or magazine articles, and so on. Another option is to have each student write a letter or poem

or draw a picture that represents the most important thing in his or her life.

Next, choose a "capsule." Preserving these items can be a challenge because the containers will have to stand up to soil moisture. Place everything in tightly sealed plastic bags and then place the bags in a tightly sealed container. Tape the container closed for additional protection.

Bury the capsule, and plant a perennial above or to the side of it to mark the spot. If you plant the capsule to the side, record very specific directions, such as "the capsule is buried 5 feet due East of the rose



Use a perennial plant to mark the site.

- **Herbaceous perennials** have stems and leaves that die back each winter, but grow back from the roots and underground crowns in the spring. Herbaceous perennials do not form wood cells in their stems, although they might look woody. Strawberries and daylilies are two examples.
- **Shrubs** grow woody stems and usually have multiple trunks. They generally grow no more than 15 feet tall.
- **Trees** also have woody stems, but they usually have a single trunk that, when mature, reaches taller than 15 feet.

bush” to help you find it

Pick a date for opening the time capsule and mark it on your calendar.

Make sure you don't forget about it!

Finally, when it is time to open the time capsule, gather the students to unearth the capsule. Take time to reflect on what has changed and what hasn't.

Since annuals and biennials may die before it is time to dig up your capsule, a perennial plant is your best option for making sure your marker is effective. Keep in mind that as the plant grows its roots will grow and spread, too. Consider planting a small perennial that will be easy to dig up and move. Or, if you choose a larger perennial, bury your capsule an assigned distance from your plant (for example, 10 feet due north).

For more information about time capsules visit the [International Time Capsule Society](http://www.timecapsule.org/).

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