

This educational garden list is designed to offer you ideas and creative ways to integrate a school garden into authentic learning experiences, which children will enjoy. Educational concept gardens are effective tools in teaching children about many different disciplines, while making education alive and enjoyable. Use these concepts as a platform to create your own specialty gardens.

### **Alphabet Plant Garden**

- ⊗ Plant a garden using the alphabet including one plant whose name begins with each letter of a famous author.
- ⊗ Create alphabet letter plant markers to identify plants in the garden.
- ⊗ Use the student's first letter of their first names to plant the garden.

### **African, Asian or Latin-American Gardens**

- ⊗ Create a garden using plants that are native to or frequently used in these countries.
- ⊗ Cook traditional regional foods and have the students taste the products.
- ⊗ Use a map or globe to have students connect geography to vegetation, culture, and foods.
- ⊗ As an indoor winter project, have students create a miniature bonsai or ikebana flower arrangements and research the symbolism in each.
- ⊗ Using a map, show children where the Latin countries are located and tie geography to vegetation, culture, and food such as tomatoes, tomatillos, cilantro, and peppers.
- ⊗ Have students research a particular part of the world or specific country and choose plants that are representative of that region to grow in your garden.
- ⊗ Have students observe, make predictions, and then research to determine how the plants are specially-adapted to their native region.
- ⊗ Create a "school garden recipe book" with recipes that use items from the school garden collected from their native countries.

### **American History Garden**

- ⊗ Create a garden using plants that were once used for cloth or dyes (cotton, flax, beets, etc.).
- ⊗ Learn how to dye cloth using plants from the garden.
- ⊗ Use or learn about plants that were discovered by Lewis and Clark.
- ⊗ Learn about plants that are native to North America or your school's state.
- ⊗ Plant a Kitchen Garden with heirloom vegetables, herbs, and flowers used by Colonial Americans for food, medicine, fragrance, and economic value.
- ⊗ Plant a grain garden with cereal crops that are grown in your region.

## Art Garden

- ✿ Grow plants that can be used for art projects (i.e., dried flowers, flowers for pressing, interesting seed pods, gourds, and mullein stalks for making candles).
- ✿ Sell items made with garden products to raise money for the next garden season.
- ✿ Create a garden mosaic of student designs on a garden wall or on a bird bath.
- ✿ Have students take sketch books out in the garden and draw plants and bug life.

## Butterfly Garden

- ✿ Have student's research plants that attract butterflies.
- ✿ Discuss the butterfly lifecycle and the role of pollinators.
- ✿ Read "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" by Eric Carle.
- ✿ Raise and observe developing butterflies.
- ✿ Create butterfly journals to record development of classroom butterflies.

## Fruit Garden

- ✿ Grow small fruit trees like apples, pears, blueberries and cherries.
- ✿ Plant grape vines and press the grapes for juice.
- ✿ Count the pits in a watermelon, cantaloupe or other seeded fruit.
- ✿ Create a strawberry patch and bake a Strawberry Short Cake.

## Herb and Tea Garden

- ✿ Discuss how herbs and teas played an important part in the development of world trade.
- ✿ Learn the difference between herbal tea and black tea.
- ✿ Make herbal vinegars, oils, or sachets for Mother's Day gifts. Dry herbs from the school garden and sell at Parent Night to raise money for next year's garden materials.
- ✿ Harvest fresh herbs to chop and mix with cream cheese to serve for a class or school event, or to use in other cooking projects, i.e. pesto, tomato sauce.
- ✿ Create a garden using plants commonly used in herbal teas such as chamomile, mint, sage, lemon verbena, and rosemary.
- ✿ Learn about different types of cultural uses and tea ceremonies throughout the world.
- ✿ Make herbal mint tea.
- ✿ Have a classroom tea party.

## Jack and the Bean Stalk Garden

- ✿ Plant "Giant"-type sunflowers.
- ✿ Read "Jack and the Bean Stalk" in the garden
- ✿ Dissect a bean seed.
- ✿ Make a bean seed necklace
- ✿ Cook dishes using beans and teach students of their many health benefits like being high in protein, which helps feed many people around the world.
- ✿ Grow different types of beans simultaneously and see which grows fastest and biggest.

## Kinder Garden

- ✿ Build raised beds in various geometrical shapes.
- ✿ Plant a rainbow garden; see *Rainbow Colors for Health* to use flower color to plant a "rainbow". Use plants with large seeds that are easy for little fingers to handle, such as sunflowers, cucumbers, and squash or gourds.
- ✿ Sunflowers and gourds grow very quickly—use them as the basis for a "measuring garden" where young ones learning to measure can practice measuring a couple of times each week.

## Kitchen Garden

- ✿ Create a garden with vegetables for each different plant part—roots, stems, flowers, fruits, and seeds and learn about plant parts using foods we eat. Try using *Chicago Botanic Garden's Botany Basics: Kitchen Botany Facilitator Guide*.
- ✿ Grow a salad garden that will be ready to harvest before school is out for the summer.
- ✿ Plant a fruit and veggie garden featuring "vegetables" such as lettuce, carrots, and spinach as well as "fruits" (anything with a seed) such as squash, cucumbers, or eggplant.

## Literacy/Reading Garden

- ✿ Feature garden story books to be read in the garden each week.
- ✿ Use plants found in children's literature such as "Peter Rabbit," "The Ugly Vegetables," or "Growing Vegetable Soup".
- ✿ Have students design a garden with plants found in storybooks.
- ✿ Incorporate a Jack and the Beanstalk bean teepee, or a poppy field as found in *Wizard of Oz*, or a Peter Rabbit section including cabbage, carrots, etc.
- ✿ Students can make and write their own books or fairy tale.
- ✿ Have students create a Peter Rabbit play to act out in their garden.
- ✿ Create a "nest" space in the garden where students can sit and read Peter Rabbit and other books.

## Create a reading circle in the garden

- ✿ Have students construct nature journals to record garden development and collect seeds and pressed flowers.
- ✿ Have students write stories or poems about gardening or plants in the school garden.
- ✿ Read seed packets as a reading activity.
- ✿ Create a school garden newsletter to share with parents and the community.
- ✿ Have children write stories about the garden or their experiences gardening in books that they make.
- ✿ Use the garden as the context for new vocabulary words or for writing from different perspectives.

### **Math Garden**

- ✿ Create a garden to include raised beds of various geometric shapes.
- ✿ Have the children estimate number of seeds they will need in a row based on row length and seed spacing information on seed packet.
- ✿ Have children chart seedling growth.
- ✿ Create a square-foot garden.
- ✿ Have children figure out how much of certain plants they would need to grow to feed their own family, their class, their school, etc.

### **Maze Garden**

- ✿ Create a maze in your garden using grasses, a hedge, or corn plants.
- ✿ Include something fun like reading and hiding areas in the middle of your maze.
- ✿ Use maize (corn) in your maze for a "play on words".

### **Native-American Garden/Colonial Garden**

- ✿ Learn about the Three Sisters Garden tradition, incorporating corn, squash and beans.
- ✿ Create a garden using plants that are native to America or plants traditionally used by Native Americans, such as mullein.
- ✿ Make corn seed necklaces.
- ✿ Discuss medicinal plants; learn how Native Americans and Colonial settlers used plants as medicine.
- ✿ Grind and cook cornmeal in a traditional style, and create other dishes using native foods.

### **Outer Space Garden**

- ✿ Create a garden using "outer space" sounding plants such as Moon Flower, Moon and Stars' Watermelon, and Cosmos.
- ✿ Research which plants might grow well in orbit and which will not.

### **Pizza Garden**

- ✿ Grow a garden that has all the ingredients for pizza: wheat, tomatoes, peppers, oregano, basil, onions, garlic, etc.
- ✿ Learn about the history of pizza.
- ✿ Grow mushrooms in your classroom.
- ✿ Make a classroom pizza using produce from your garden.
- ✿ Use the pizza garden as the basis to launch a study on Old World and New World plants.

### **Salsa Garden**

- ⊗ Create a garden with all of the plants you might find in salsa (tomatoes, cilantro, onions, peppers, and garlic).
- ⊗ Have students create a salsa recipe to make and share with other classrooms.
- ⊗ Make salsa to give as gifts or sell at a garden fundraiser.

### **Sensory Garden**

- ⊗ Use plants you can feel, smell, taste, touch and hear.
- ⊗ Create a lesson or activity where students can use their five senses.
- ⊗ Grow edible flowers such as pansies, nasturtiums, borages, etc.
- ⊗ Have students find ways they can use their five senses in the garden and then combine this with activities and lessons in art.
- ⊗ Using musical instruments made out of garden tools, seedpods, branches, gourds, grass blades, or flower pots have a garden concert.
- ⊗ Use plants that will have winter interest (especially if you live in a cold climate) such as grasses, shrubs, and trees with colored or exfoliating bark, evergreens, and plants with seed pods that will persist into winter.

### **Shakespeare Garden**

- ⊗ Create a garden using plants mentioned in Shakespeare's works.
- ⊗ Discuss the mythical or medicinal uses of Shakespearean plants.
- ⊗ Research the meaning or significance of plants or flowers found in Shakespeare's work.

### **Tops and Bottoms Garden**

- ⊗ Hang plants and grow them upside down using inverted baskets.

### **Vegetable Snack Garden**

- ⊗ Encourage children to grow fruits and vegetables that they would like to taste, favorites as well as new items.
- ⊗ Incorporate nutrition lessons.
- ⊗ Have students keep a food journal to record what plants they eat.
- ⊗ Build and observe a compost bin in your school garden.
- ⊗ Discuss when to plant/harvest vegetables in the garden.
- ⊗ Learn about plant life cycles.