

Theme Gardens

Overview: Theme gardens are an excellent way to foster the love of gardening with your children. The inspiration for a theme garden can come from many things like a story, a favorite food, a favorite color, a historical event, or a favorite animal. As you brainstorm, let your younger gardener's imagination run wild and then search for plant that help you achieve your chosen theme (and that will grow well in your area).

Materials:

- books, magazines and computers to search for inspiration
- paper to draw ideas and garden plans
- soil, plants and seeds to grow your garden

Approximate Time to Complete: variable depending on children and type of garden designed

Location: outdoor

Ages: all ages

Season: planning can be done any time, planting will most likely take place during spring, summer or fall.

Instructions:

1. Begin by picking a theme for your garden. You can use your theme to guide you through the garden designing process. A theme can be anything you can imagine. Here are a few ideas:

Alphabet Garden - Try to use plants whose names start with the different letters of the alphabet.

Butterfly Garden - Include plants that will attract butterflies to your yard.

Book Garden - Pick out a book with a garden theme and then try to recreate it such as Peter Rabbit or Tops and Bottoms.

Dinosaur Garden - Grow plants that were around when the dinosaurs were alive like ferns and horsetail.

Giant's Garden - Plant varieties which will grow super big like giant sunflowers that reach 15 feet in height and pumpkins that grow to 150 pounds.

Miniature Garden - Plant varieties that will stay really small like baby carrots and tiny pumpkins.

Moon Garden - Grow plants that bloom at night like moonflowers.

Pizza Garden - Grow all the ingredients to make a pizza including tomatoes, wheat, basil, oregano, peppers and onions.

Rainbow Garden - Use plants whose flowers or leaves show off the different colors of the rainbow including red, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple.

Salad Garden - Grow all the ingredients to make a tasty salad like lettuce, carrots, radishes and cucumbers.

Salsa Garden - Grow all the ingredients to make your own salsa including tomatoes, garlic, cilantro and peppers.

Sensory Garden – Select plants that engage your senses such as plants with soft leaves or herbs with scented leaves.

Three Sisters Garden - Native peoples from different parts of North America often planted corn, beans, and squash together - a trio often referred to as the "three sisters."

Zoo Garden - Include plants who share names with animals like lamb's ear or catnip.

2. After you choose your theme, decide on the type of garden you want to grow. Will you install your garden in the ground, in a raised bed or in containers?
3. Next determine where you will place your garden. Is there a lot of sunlight available? Is there water near by?
4. Finally, with theme, garden structure and location selected, find plants that will grow well in your area and create your design. If you're looking for help, you can research online, at the library or perhaps visit some public gardens for direction.
5. Draw a picture of your dream garden then transform it to a more detailed garden map on graph paper.
6. Gather your supplies and dig in!