

WISCONSIN SCHOOL GARDEN INITIATIVE BRIEF

WSGI'S FAVORITE GARDEN LESSONS AND ACTIVITIES



**Wisconsin
Partnership Program**
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

All educators know the importance of having a selection of lessons and activities at their fingertips. Quick access to lessons that can teach key concepts to various group sizes and activities that enthrall students of diverse ages are always in demand, no matter the classroom setting. Let this brief be your reference for garden activities and lessons that you will use again and again. From garden necklaces to seed art, it's all right here!

Principles of garden-based education

No matter the lesson or activity, here are three principles of garden-based education to keep in mind.

- **Let the garden be the teacher:** Support learning through direct observation and exploration.
- **Make it hands-on:** Create ample opportunities for students to learn while doing.
- **Build self-efficacy:** Help students gain confidence and mastery in the garden by setting them up for success through scaffolding and modeling.



Garden materials

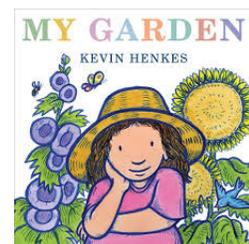
In addition to hoes, trowels, and watering cans, don't forget about the other materials that support garden lessons and activities. Here is a list of items to keep near the garden.

- Garden journals/paper
- Pencils
- Clipboards
- Glue
- Paint
- Crayons
- Scissors
- Tape: masking, painter



- Yarn
- Seeds
- Plant press
- Net
- Magnifying glasses
- Bug boxes
- Field guides
- Books (see sidebar)

Make your garden double as a library! Visit www.communitygroundworks.org/content/curricula-and-activities-school-gardens#booklists to find garden-themed books for kids of all ages!



Favorite garden lessons and activities

Flexibility is the key to teaching in a garden. Sudden changes in the weather and unexpected animal sightings are just a couple of the many situations that can transform a lesson in an instant. Moments like these are wonderful learning opportunities — taking a few minutes to follow a butterfly's flight might help shape a generation of lepidopterists. However, these moments also require garden educators to allow the garden to be the teacher. Having a repertoire of garden lessons and activities like the ones below will help garden educators feel confident that, no matter the situation, they have an engaging activity to showcase the variety of lessons a garden contains.



Deck yourself in the garden's bounty! Use grape vines to make bracelets, necklaces, or crowns. Or place painter's tape sticky side out around your wrist. Stick flowers and plants to it for a natural bracelet!



Seeds can keep students excited about the garden long past the fall harvest. Put old, unviable seeds to good use by turning them into art! Students will love incorporating the different sized and shaped seeds.



Earth Art is a great way for youth to explore the multitude of textures and colors in the garden. Create a frame and have students collect items to place within it. Once completed, take a gallery walk of each frame.



Produce a play! Berries become paintbrushes to create scenery. Greens transform into masks. Natural materials provide all the props you need. Act out a favorite garden book or tell the story of your garden.



Garden yoga doesn't require any equipment, yet offers the benefits of focused, energized students. Learn a few poses before heading into the garden. Model each position for students before having them join in. Om.



Explore the treasures hidden in the garden by having a scavenger hunt. Add structure to this activity by providing pictures or clues of items to find. For a more free-flowing hunt, call out a color and send kids running.



Flowers offer endless activity options. Press or pound them to make garden bookmarks or greeting cards. String and hang them for sweet-smelling décor. Or make a bouquet to beautify the garden area.

Other favorite resources

Got Veggies: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/physical-activity/foodsystem/gotveggies.htm

The Science School Yard: scienceschoolyard.blogspot.com/search/label/garden

Garden Songs and Games: <http://us7.campaign-archive1.com/?u=de183d3fbb459b209137418c7&id=7e12f9de5f>

WSGI Pinterest Page: www.pinterest.com/wsgi/school-garden-activities/

Life Lab "Back Pocket" Activities: www.lifelab.org/tag/back-pocket-activities/

Wisconsin Ag in the Classroom: www.wisagclassroom.org/

Growing Minds Farm to School: <http://growing-minds.org/>



Visit us at WSchoolGardens.org
or contact us at wsgi@communitygroundworks.org

Community GroundWorks
3601 Memorial Drive, Suite 4
Madison, WI 53704
Phone: 608-240-0409