

Building a Maze

Overview: For thousands of years, people around the world have built mazes and labyrinths. The image of an ancient maze is carved onto the wall of a tomb dating back to 3000 BC! By the sixteenth century, mazes and labyrinths were common features in gardens and were often made by planting tall hedges to form thick walls. These were constructed to provide both fun and mystery. Today, mazes are built for outdoor adventure. Although the large-scale mazes attract the most attention, you can also plant a smaller maze using shorter plants for a bit of fun in a home or school garden.

Materials:

- Graph paper
- Materials to construct your maze. Some common materials used to make a maze include shrubs, corn plants (a maize maze), grass or wildflower plantings, sunflowers, hay bales and turf.

Approximate Time to Complete: 2 to 4 hours to plan and plant; many weeks to grow

Location: Outdoor (although you could plant one indoors using container plants)

Ages: all ages

Season: all seasons

Instructions:

1. Search the Internet for examples of different types of mazes. Help this inspire you to create your own design. You can make a maze permanent by using perennial plants such as evergreen shrubs, ornamental grasses, or low-growing lamb's ear. Or change it from year to year by using annual plants like corn, sunflowers, or snapdragons. If your space is limited, try making temporary mazes on a paved surface using potted plants (they'll need frequent watering) or supplementing with hay bales. You can even mow a maze into a lawn by letting the grass grow a few inches longer than normal, then cutting paths.
2. Select a site for your maze and measure the space available.
3. Once you have identified the materials you want to work with and the space available, sketch out your maze on a piece of graph paper. Determine how many plants you will need to purchase. This can be a great math exercise!
4. Collected your plant material. Before planting, lay out your maze design in the garden using a piece of string or you can also use flour as a temporary marker for your path boundaries.
5. Plant and watch your maze grow. With a living wall, you will want to be careful not to step on your plants, especially right after planting. Once the plants' roots get a little more established, the walls will be sturdier.