

A Pirate's Garden

Overview:

Ahoy Matey! Are you looking for a fun and engaging way to capture a child's attention outdoors? Dare to walk the plank and plant a Pirate's Garden!

Materials:

- In ground garden space, raised beds or containers
- Plants and accessories related to the Pirate theme

Approximate Time to Complete: 4 to 6 hours to plan and plant, additional months to grow

Location: Outdoor

Ages: 4 to 10

Season: spring and summer

Instructions:

1. Begin by selecting a site for your new Pirate's Garden. An area with six to eight hours of sunlight and plenty of room for kids to romp and play would be best.
2. Identify the plants and accessories you would like for your garden. Some ideas include:

Treasure:

- Plant a pot of gold. Find an old wooden box, drill a few holes at the bottom, fill with soil, and then plant yellow blooming plants like marigolds or calendula.
- For silver, plant a silver dollar or money plant (*Lunaria annua*). As suggested by its name, its fruit looks like silver dollars.
- Leave a section of the garden unplanted with shovels handy for your young adventurers to dig for buried treasure.
- Attach metal 'loot' to strings and hang from a tree for a fun and simple wind chime.

Water:

- Add a water feature. There are many types of fountains available ranging from small bubblers to multi-tiered sprouting fountains. You can also step it up a notch and plant a water garden. Simple water gardens can be constructed in containers or you can invest in a more elaborate water garden using a preformed or flexible plastic liner.
- If you have young children or are concerned about attracting unwanted wildlife, create the illusion of water by planting blue flowering plants such as blue daze or lobelia. Another alternative is to use blue colored pebbles or tile pieces.

Ship or Hideout:

- A bean tepee can represent a pirate ship or hideout. To build a bean tepee you will need some long supporting pieces, and a method of attaching them at the top, tepee-style. There are kits available to purchase commercially, usually using bamboo poles and a plastic connector ring. Or, you can easily build your own by lashing together some straight tree branches that are about eight or nine feet long. If you use longer poles, the tepee will be more difficult to erect, and the beans will be harder to pick. You could also use

recycled lumber or PVC pipe. The more poles you use, the more convincing the illusion, so try to use at least six or seven supports. Steps for building a tepee include:

1. Splay the poles open to form the skeleton of your tepee. Top with a pirate flag.
2. Attach trellis netting or have your kids help weave string or yarn around the outside of the frame to give the vines more area to scramble over. They will look like fishing nets. Line the floor of the tepee with flattened cardboard boxes (your kids can decorate them with colored chalk) or a thick layer of mulch to keep down weeds.
3. Plant your climbing pole bean seeds at the base of each pole and stand back, Jack! Thin the plants as recommended on the seed packet and help your children remember to pick the beans regularly to keep the vines producing.

Additional Accessories:

Get creative with additional accessories such as a garden gnome with an eye patch, a partially buried 'treasure' chest, plastic alligators, mermaid dolls, sword-shaped plant tags, or even a stuffed parrot!

3. Gather your supplies and dig in. Remember this garden theme is designed to inspire creativity and foster pretend play in your children, so make sure to leave room for small feet to run and jump along with areas for them to dig and explore.