

Design a Sensory Garden

Overview: With the right design, plants, and accessories, you can plant an engaging garden that will delight all your senses!

Materials:

- Paper and pencils to write down your ideas
- Your imagination!

Approximate Time to Complete: 1 to 2 hours

Location: Indoor or outdoor

Ages: All ages

Season: All seasons



Instructions:

With their incredible diversity of shapes, sizes, colors, scents, and textures, plants offer limitless options for designing a garden to engage the all the senses. Here are some tips for creating a special garden space that will allow you and your young gardeners to explore through sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing.

1. Choose appropriate plant beds and containers.

The first thing to consider is how to ensure the garden is easily accessible to provide multiple opportunities to engage with the space. Raised beds, containers set on tables, or even hanging baskets or vertical gardens, bring plants up from the ground to waist- or face-level for children, allowing them to get up close and personal with plants. Sensory gardens be any shape or size, so don't forget that indoor gardens under grow lights or in bright window light are an option, too.

If you choose to use in-ground or raised beds, make sure they are not too wide or else children may not be able to reach the plants in the middle. If you have spaces that are hard to reach, consider adding pathways to help your younger gardeners explore.

2. Pick a theme.

You can choose to focus broadly on sensory plants and select materials that will delight all the senses (and many plants naturally attract more than one sense anyway; for instance, a mint smells and taste great and it also has an interesting texture) or you can hone in on one sense, like creating a rainbow garden that would primarily be visually appealing.

3. Select sense-engaging plants.

Check out our list of recommended [sensory garden plants](#). As always, in addition to selecting plants for their sense attracting properties, also look for varieties that are well adapted to your existing growing conditions (such as light and water availability) so that your garden can be as easy to maintain as possible.

4. Dress up the garden with 'sense'sational accessories.

Add sound by making your own wind chimes from old silverware or install a small water gurgling fountain. Add texture with different types of paving stones and seating areas made of a variety of natural and man-made materials. Add visual appeal with brightly colored signs and sculptures.

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Interactive features like a dig site which is left unplanted can also be fun. Young children especially love getting their hands in the soil.

5. Always keep safety in mind.

Since a sensory garden encourages kids to smell, taste, and touch, make sure to avoid using poisonous plants or plants with foliage or thorns that may irritate or puncture skin. You may want to group all edible plants in one spot to make sure it is clear which ones can be consumed.

6. Embrace exploration.

Once you install the garden, make sure to remember that exploration is your goal. Sensory garden plants may get a little bit more picking and prodding than those in some other types of gardens, but that is all part of the experience. Although you can certainly establish some parameters, make sure your young gardeners feel free to interact with the plants and special features in your garden. That is an important part of the learning process.

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