

Design a Healing Garden

Overview: A garden can be a place to relax, alleviate stress, restore your spirit and find peace. Although just being in nature and surrounded by green space can positively contribute to mental and physical health without any specific planning, intentionally designing your garden space with this purpose in mind can provide even more benefits. In this activity, young gardeners will brainstorm ways to create their own healing garden.



Materials:

- Sketch or graph paper
- Colored pencils, markers or crayons
- A clipboard
- Materials and supplies to turn your healing garden ideas into reality (optional)

Approximate Time to Complete: 30+ minutes

Location: Outdoor

Ages: All Ages

Season: Any season

Instructions

1. Healing gardens come in many different shapes and sizes. Some healing gardens feature medicinal plants and/or plants providing nutrient-rich produce which can be used for healing physical ailments. Others are designed to relieve stress by offering a peaceful space in a natural setting for minds to rest and to take a break from our high-tech world. Healing gardens can also offer opportunities for movement and activity that can engage our body and senses and restore our spirit. The first step to designing a healing garden is to decide, What do you want your healing garden to do for you?
2. Next, visit an outdoor space where you would like to install your healing garden. It does not need to be a large space, or even a space with soil. You can install a small container healing garden on a patio or balcony. Sketch your space and take notes about the size and how much sunlight is available. Do you have access to water? Are there views you need to block to help create a sense of peace? Don't forget to consider vertical space or even opportunities for an indoor garden if a safe outdoor space is not available.
3. With your young gardeners, create a wish list. Just as with any garden for kids, the more input they have in planning the space, the more invested they will be in it. Spark their imagination with questions like: What would you like to do in your garden? Do you want to attract butterflies? Do you want plants that you can touch, feel, taste, smell or that make noise? Do you want to grow something you can eat? Do you have a favorite color that could be featured in flowers or accessories?

If you need some inspiration, here are some design elements that you might want to consider for your healing garden:

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A Sitting Area. This could be a place to relax, read, or talk. It should be comfortable to sit in and shaded from hot sun. It could offer some privacy for quiet times. You could also use it as a space to connect like through a color and chat activity (check out the [Pollinator Pals coloring pages](#)). From [Friendship Forts](#) to [Sunflower Houses](#) to [Reading Gardens](#), you can craft a space that is just the right size for your young gardeners.

A Digging Bed. For some young gardeners, being active is what helps them feel calm and focused. A Digging Bed is simply a space (either in the ground or in a raised bed or container) that is left unplanted for continual digging fun. All you need is a trowel (or even a sturdy spoon) and a desire to explore.

Plants that Attract Wildlife. From birds to butterflies, watching wildlife in garden areas provides engagement without being over-stimulating. Remembering we share our world with other animals can provide important connection points.

Sensory Plants. From bright-colored blooms to fuzzy leaves to stems that offer gentle sounds in the wind, garden plants can engage all of your senses and provide stimulation and comfort. [Check out our Sensory Garden Growing Guide.](#)

Creative Containers. Short on space? [Container gardens](#) are for you! You can plant a mobile garden in a 5-gallon bucket, a vertical garden in a plastic over-the-door shoe organizer or a window garden in repurposed food containers.

Gifts from the Garden. The self-confidence boost kids can receive from being praised for their work in the garden is amazing. Being able to use their garden to give gifts, such as cut flowers, [pressed flowers](#), and edible treats — or just having their garden help beautify their home or neighborhood — brings special joy. The pride of contributing to their community in a positive way is a powerful tool for improving social and emotional health.

Don't forget garden accessories like wind chimes, bird feeders and baths, gazing balls, gnomes, and more! Many of these items can be lovingly handmade by repurposing materials and serve as healing activities on their own.

4. Use your ideas to sketch out a design for your healing garden. As you are able, plant your garden. If a personal garden is not feasible at this time, search out your community for accessible green spaces that can offer some of the same benefits. Talk with your local community centers, hospitals, libraries, churches and schools for possible healing garden opportunities.

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