

Garden Heroes Wax Museum

Overview: Integrate your garden into the English and social studies curriculum by hosting a living wax museum featuring people who have made notable contributions to our knowledge of plants and the natural world. Interactive and engaging, creating a living wax museum transforms an ordinary biography project into an exciting and memorable experience. It can also foster students' passion for pursuing garden-related careers by spotlighting individuals whose actions have improved our food systems and cared for our environment.



Grade Level/Range: 3rd through 6th Grade

Objective(s):

Students will:

- Identify individuals living in the past and present who have made significant contributions to the gardening world.
- Choose one garden hero to research.
- Create a living wax museum to share research findings with others.

Time: 1 to 2 weeks

Materials:

- Student Wax Museum Research Worksheets
- Pencils or pens
- Internet or library access
- Craft paper, poster boards, or display boards
- Craft materials such as markers, glue, tape, etc.
- Costumes and props

Background Information:

Taking a deep dive into the lives of influential people, past and present, is a dynamic way for students to learn history. Connecting the lives of prominent individuals to specific periods in time adds relevance that cannot be achieved by memorizing dates and facts. Sometimes, students lose their enthusiasm when the assignment to help them process and share their new biographical knowledge is a traditional book report or research paper. Wax museum projects were developed to offer a hands-on activity to match the engagement of learning about real people.

For hundreds of years, wax has been used as a medium to capture the likeness of individuals in sculptural form. Its pliability and texture allow for the creation of detailed works of art that almost look alive. Collections of wax sculptures have been shared in museums around the world. Building on this concept, a wax museum project guides students in researching famous individuals in history, and they then share their findings by becoming a living representation of their chosen subject. Although schools may not have access to the tools to create wax figures, students dress up as their notable

KidsGardening is a nonprofit educational organization. Support provided by sponsors and donors is critical to our ability to provide free garden-based resources for parents and educators. All

figure and give a short, first-person presentation to share with others.

Creating a wax museum featuring individuals who have made impactful contributions in gardening, agriculture, and ecology/environmental science can serve as an interactive, interdisciplinary activity that connects the garden to science, social studies, and ELA curriculum. Here are a few ideas for possible individuals to spotlight to begin your brainstorming:

Notable Historic Contributors:

- Liberty Hyde Bailey
- Rachel Carson
- George Washington Carver
- John Chapman
- Beatrix Farrand
- Minerva Hamilton Hoyt
- Thomas Jefferson
- Lady Bird Johnson
- W.S. Merwin
- Frederick Law Olmsted
- Katherine Olivia Sessions
- Ellen Biddle Shipman
- Harriet Strong

Notable Modern-Day Contributors:

- Will Allen
- Rick Barboza
- Grace Lee Boggs
- Wendell Berry
- Ron Finley
- Tony Hillery
- Winona LaDuke
- Joe Lamp'1
- Michelle Obama
- Jadav Payeng
- Leah Penniman
- Eva Sommaripa
- Katie Stagliano
- Karen Washington
- Rowen White

Laying the Groundwork:

Ask students to define the word 'hero' and to create a list of all the character traits they think a hero would display.

Once the list is made, share this definition from Merriam-Webster Dictionary: A hero is "a person who shows great courage; a person admired for achievements and noble qualities." Ask: *How does this definition compare to the list our class came up with? Can ordinary, everyday people be*

KidsGardening is a nonprofit educational organization. Support provided by sponsors and donors is critical to our ability to provide free garden-based resources for parents and educators. All

heroes? What about in the garden, do you think we have garden heroes?

Share the book *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin with your students. After reading the book, ask again, “Do you think we have garden heroes?”

Exploration:

1. Provide an overview of the wax museum project. Explain that each student is going to select a garden hero from the past or present to study and research. After researching, the class will host a wax museum event to share your findings. Everyone will create a display and presentation to share information about their chosen garden hero. There are numerous YouTube videos with examples of school wax museums; if you would like to share an example with them (PBS offers an example of a [Wax Museum from Washington Elementary School](#)). The Wax Museum Research Worksheets and steps below can serve as a guide:
2. Students begin by selecting a person to research. A list of possible historic and present-day garden heroes is listed in the Background Information. They can also find their own or even look for a local garden hero to highlight.
3. Complete necessary research. Students can use library books or internet resources to uncover important facts about their chosen garden hero. This is a great time to ask your library to talk with students about how to find and evaluate quality web sources.
4. Ask students to use their research to create a backdrop for their hero presentations. This can be done on craft paper or poster board to be hung on the wall behind them, or they could use a 3-fold display board set on a table. Suggested things to include on the backdrop include: the person’s name in large letters, a picture or drawing of the hero, a short summary of their life, a timeline of important events in their life, and any other additional interesting facts they discover and would like to share.
5. Instruct students to write a brief 1-minute speech in first-person that they can share to introduce their garden hero to others.
6. Encourage students to find a costume that will help them look like their garden hero. They can bring clothing or other accessories from home, or you can provide craft paper for them to craft designs.
7. Involve students in planning the wax museum event. Possible involvement may include creating promotional posters or flyers, creating invitations for other students and/or caregivers to attend, sharing information through school-wide announcements, and helping with the design of the space. During the event, students will line up in front of their backdrops, dressed in their costumes, and deliver their short garden hero presentations. Students can also make a “Press Here” button that visitors can use to request to hear their presentations.
8. Practice for the event. Remember that public speaking may be a challenge for some students. Give them a chance to deliver their speech to friends and trusted adults before the bigger event.

KidsGardening is a nonprofit educational organization. Support provided by sponsors and donors is critical to our ability to provide free garden-based resources for parents and educators. All

9. Host your wax museum. A lot of time and heart go into each and every project, so make sure the final event feels like a proper celebration of your efforts.

Making Connections:

After the event, review the experience. The highlighted garden heroes used their time and talents to make the world a better place through their work with plants and the natural world. Challenge students to brainstorm ways they, too, might make a difference in their community through gardening.

Branching Out:

Extend the lesson with additional creative writing projects:

- Ask students to create their own [Garden Superhero Comic](#). Rather than modeling after a real person, let their imagination run wild as they craft a story about a garden hero larger than life.
- Create a class "People" magazine to showcase the notable garden heroes from your Wax Museum Project for future classes to enjoy. Each student can create their own page using a magazine template on a platform like Canva, along with details and photos from their project.

Connection to Standards

This lesson can be used to teach the following Common Core State Standards

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.3](#)

Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.5](#)

Use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.7](#)

Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.3](#)

Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.3](#)

Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.3](#)

Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7](#)

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

KidsGardening is a nonprofit educational organization. Support provided by sponsors and donors is critical to our ability to provide free garden-based resources for parents and educators. All

©2025 KidsGardening.org. All Rights Reserved

Garden Heroes Wax Museum Project Instructions

Project Due Date: _____

Follow the steps below to complete your Garden Hero Wax Museum project. Check off each step as it is finished:

Completed	Steps to Complete
	Select a hero: _____
	Complete the Garden Heroes Research Page.
Make a backdrop that includes the following:	
	1. Garden hero's name
	2. Summary of the garden hero's life
	3. Timeline of major events for the garden hero
	4. At least one picture or drawing of the garden hero
	Write a one-minute presentation in first person for your garden hero.
	Find or make a costume that looks like your garden hero.
	Make a "Press Here" button.
	Practice your presentation.

KidsGardening is a nonprofit educational organization. Support provided by sponsors and donors is critical to our ability to provide free garden-based resources for parents and educators. All

©2025 KidsGardening.org. All Rights Reserved

Name: _____

Garden Heroes Wax Museum Research Page

My garden hero's name: _____

Date my garden hero was born: _____

Date my garden hero died (leave blank if still alive): _____

Where my garden hero grew up: _____

5 significant events in my garden hero's life:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

My garden hero is best known for:

KidsGardening is a nonprofit educational organization. Support provided by sponsors and donors is critical to our ability to provide free garden-based resources for parents and educators. All

©2025 KidsGardening.org. All Rights Reserved

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

©2025 KidsGardening.org. All Rights Reserved

Create a timeline that shows the order of the five significant events in your garden hero's life:

1. Year:	→	2. Year:
↓		
3. Year:	→	4. Year:
↓		
5. Year:		

KidsGardening is a nonprofit educational organization. Support provided by sponsors and donors is critical to our ability to provide free garden-based resources for parents and educators. All

©2025 KidsGardening.org. All Rights Reserved