

Children's Learning Garden Exhibits & Committees

1. Mini Orchards

This exhibit would include dwarf fruit trees approximately 8 to 10 feet high and could include various apples, pears, peaches, plums, and cherries. There would also be small fruits such as blueberries, cranberries, grapes, kiwis, strawberries, and blackberries. The fruits would reflect the agricultural history of Southern New Jersey. It would permit the involvement of established organizations such as 4-H, USDA Cooperative Extension, States Agricultural Department, Orchard Growers Association. This feature would provide products useful in culinary programs and agricultural activities. Additional perennial food plants (those that do not require replanting) could be incorporated into the orchard such as asparagus and rhubarb.

2. Herb Garden

The growth of herbs has a rich history dating back hundreds if not thousands of years. Many famous landscapes such as the Charlemagne Herb Garden are documented in terms of the types of plants grown. Herbs include plants used in cooking, dyeing medicinal purposes, insecticidal, and so forth. There is a great deal of folklore associated with the herbs and many new plants from the Americas and Australia have been added to the well-known European and Asian varieties in recent history. Herbs are favored plants among hobbyists. Involving hobbyists in the Children's Learning Garden should not be difficult. If we were to pursue medicinal plants, we might enlist the aid of a pharmaceutical company.

3. Vegetable Garden

Vegetables are annual plants (grown for one season only); this means the plants can be changed from year to year. We can target production for specific culinary programs and craft programs. A vegetable garden can be placed in well-designed beds with attractive walks so that it is attractive year around. Production in containers would be part of this garden and would provide opportunities to teach young people how to garden even when space is very limited. As with the orchard, all the same organizations can be enlisted to assist with the vegetable garden.

4. Alphabet Garden

An alphabet garden is essentially a paved circle with the letters of the alphabet going around the outer edge like the spoke of a wheel. Beyond the pavement in front of each letter, a plant is placed whose name begins with the associated letter. It is possible to incorporate a map of the world into the center of the circle. This map could be used to teach native origins of a given plant as well as world wide geography. A sundial might be incorporated or separate circle masonry might be developed to demonstrate this feature.

5. Butterfly Garden

To quote a line from the movie *Field of Dreams*, "If you build it, they will come." This quote references baseball players, however, in the case of a butterfly garden, if you plant flowering plants which butterflies forage on, they will come to sip nectar. Butterfly Gardens are cropping up throughout the country on school grounds, museums, botanical

gardens, and at zoos. There are many organizations over vast regions which the Children's Learning Garden might establish affiliation with so that the butterfly garden can be used to teach about migration, tagging, and specie identification. The Master Garden Program and the Junior Master Garden Program at various colleges and universities have been known to support and maintain butterfly gardens.

6. Rainbow Garden

The rainbow garden is a garden that permits teaching primary and secondary colors. It would be accomplished using spring bulbs, mainly tulips. After the blooming period passes, this garden would be available for other types of summer plantings such as an annual flowerbed. Since tulip bulbs may need to be replaced each year, a sponsor may be needed to assist with the annual funding needs for the garden. Many large bulb growers, such as Daffodil Mart, might sponsor the yearly needs of a rainbow garden.

7. Water Features/Exhibits

Aspect **A** would be a water garden for plants and animals that are native to environments of relatively low oxygen such as a pond or a lake. There are a host of ornamental plants which prosper in a quiet pool such as water lilies, insectivores, and the familiar native hibiscus. Water gardening is a rapidly growing hobby throughout the country. We might enlist the aid of both the hobbyist and the retailers selling products for this type of gardening. The Environmental Protection Agency might support this type of demonstration garden since one of its many functions is the protection of wetlands.

Aspect **B** involves moving water. Moving water in nature is associated with a river, stream, or waterfalls. It is rich in oxygen and supports quite different plant and animal species from those in a still pond or pool. Moving water would add to the interest of the Children's Learning Garden. It might also be used to demonstrate the use of a turbine or some other device that uses waterpower.

8. Windmill Garden

A windmill is a historic looking Dutch design integrated with the rainbow garden tulips display or it might be a revolutionary state of the art design. Alternative energy sources is a worldwide concern and one which has brought natural airflow (wind) to the forefront. Grants, both public and private, exist for such innovative exhibits.

9. Native Plant Garden

Using plants that are native to a given locale is a new way to approach our landscape. Plants that are native have evolved to handle climate extremes, insect and disease pests, and provide forage for native wildlife. They produce, when used in a landscape, a low maintenance garden and a new era for planning and design. A native plant demonstration garden, even if only a small sample of an area's plant production can be used to instruct individuals on the nature of plants that belong. There are many nurseries now focusing on native plant production and a growing number of environmental organizations that might assist with the development of such an exhibit. One of the most unique native landscapes, the Pine Barrens, is a short distance from Rowan University. There are many Pine Barren plants that could be used to create a highly educational garden.

10. Exhibition Space/Amphitheater

A demonstration area for the presenter and a seating area for the audience are essential. An exhibition space and an amphitheater in the Children's Learning Garden would provide a multitude of opportunities for workshops, lectures, and exhibits. If the space was enclosed with a roof, innovative green roof technology might be employed. Funding for green roof technology might be obtained from a number of government programs, energy companies, or an environmentally aware private donor.

11. Public Relations/Communications Committee

This committee would oversee and develop marketing strategies for the Children's Learning Garden. For the initial stages of the project, this committee could assist in creating brochures to be distributed during graduation ceremonies, launching websites about the garden and how to become involved, and develop newsletters for the campus community. Once the garden has been constructed, committee members can organize events such as vegetable and flower sales, and design logos for novelty items such as T-shirts, magnets, and books.

12. Grants & Funding Committee

This committee would be involved in the funding and sponsorship of the Children's Learning Garden. Some of the possible tasks of this committee include reaching out to alumni to inform them about the project, searching for government and local sponsors, and visiting area vendors who are interested in contributing to the garden. This committee would also oversee the project's budget and research costs on the various items needs for the Children's Learning Garden.

13. Volunteers Committee

This committee is an extension of the volunteers who had contributed their time to the Children's Starter Garden over the summer and making it a success. Committee members would create a schedule to visit the Children's Learning Garden periodically to monitor the plants and water them if necessary. They would also weed, replant, and maintain the exhibits. It is hoped this committee would be able to reach out to area nursing homes, churches, and elementary schools to recruit volunteers and organize trips to the site.