

Art in the Garden Action Projects

Youth can create any number of art objects to give to gardeners for their Art in the Garden Action Project. For example, they might create mosaics from tile fragments, paint a mural, or make paper from plant fibers. They could build a scarecrow, install bird houses, make dye from garden plants, or create a photographic display of the garden. Other possibilities include making a book of plant sketches or pressed plants found in the garden. The youth should ask the gardeners what kind of art they might enjoy and use this information to decide on their Art in the Garden Action Project. Although the examples here come from community gardens, you should be able to adapt them for home or school garden or other youth programs.



Ideas for Art in the Garden Action Projects

Create a "Garden Mosaic" from tile fragments

Make birdhouses and bat houses

Make dyes using plants from the garden

Create or decorate container plantings

Make paper from plant fibers

Paint a mural along a fence

Create a collection of pressed plants

Create a photo book of the garden

Build a scarecrow

Make a sketchbook of garden plants

Example Projects

Following are example Art in the Garden Action Projects. Our intent here is to give you a range of possibilities, which we hope will prove useful as you help youth develop their own project.

Create a "Garden Mosaic" from Tile Fragments

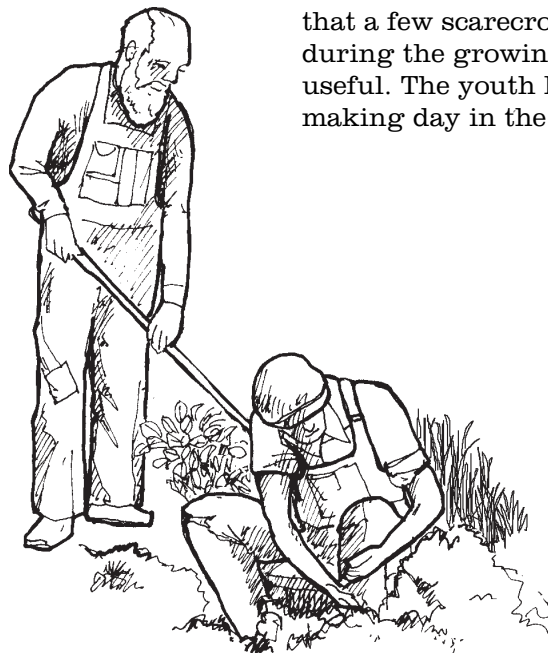
The youth notice that the path in front of the garden shed is dusty and no longer has grass. They think it would be nice to put in stepping stones or a short brick path. They discuss their idea with the gardeners and talk about possible materials. They find out that the gardeners have a pile of salvaged bricks that they could use. The youth decide to create colorful mosaics on the bricks by joining the tile fragments with grout and attaching them to the brick with a tile adhesive. They contact a local plumber and a home improvement store and learn that they have a large quantity of broken tile fragments. The youth then arrange the bricks in front of the shed to see how the path will look and dig out the area for setting the bricks. They dig about an inch deeper than the bricks so that they can place a layer of sand to create a more level surface. Then they adorn the bricks with mosaics and set them in the ground.

Make Paper from Plant Fibers

The gardeners are very helpful and generous of their time during the *i-m-science investigations*. The youth hold a brainstorming session to think of a gift that they could make for the gardeners as a sign of their appreciation. During the session, they decide to make paper using the garden plants. They research paper making from plants on the Internet. They ask the garden manager for permission to use a few of the hollyhock plants in the common area. They use the stems of the hollyhock along with other fibers and materials as the ingredients for their paper. Once the paper is made, they present it to the gardeners as a gift.

Build a Scarecrow

During the *i-m-science investigations* several gardeners mention that squirrels and certain birds feed on their corn, sunflowers, and fruit trees. This is particularly a problem at harvest time. The youth think it might be neat to make scarecrows. After doing some Internet research, they find that there are many different types of scarecrows and just about any old material can be used. When they talk to a local Cooperative Extension agent they learn that scarecrows can sometimes be effective and are worth trying. They talk with the gardeners about their idea and the gardeners think that a few scarecrows that are put up during the growing season would be useful. The youth hold a scarecrow making day in the garden.



Create or Decorate Container Plantings

During the Neighborhood Exploration the youth notice a construction site that is throwing out old planter boxes and a sink. They talk about how these materials could be used for container plants and decide to share their ideas with the gardeners. The gardeners are not interested in the old sink (although several gardeners think it would be fun, the garden manager does not approve). However, they think that if the youth decorated the planter boxes, they would look nice by the shed. The youth decorate the boxes and plant flowers in them.

Make Dyes Using Plants from the Garden

When the youth interview one of the gardeners during the Gardener Story, they learn that she enjoys knitting and used to dye her own wool. The gardener offers to teach the youth how to make dye from plants. With the help of the gardener and a book from the library, the youth make several different colored dyes from garden flowers. The group dyes some cotton fabric to make a table cloth for the picnic table in the garden.

Create a Photo Album of the Garden

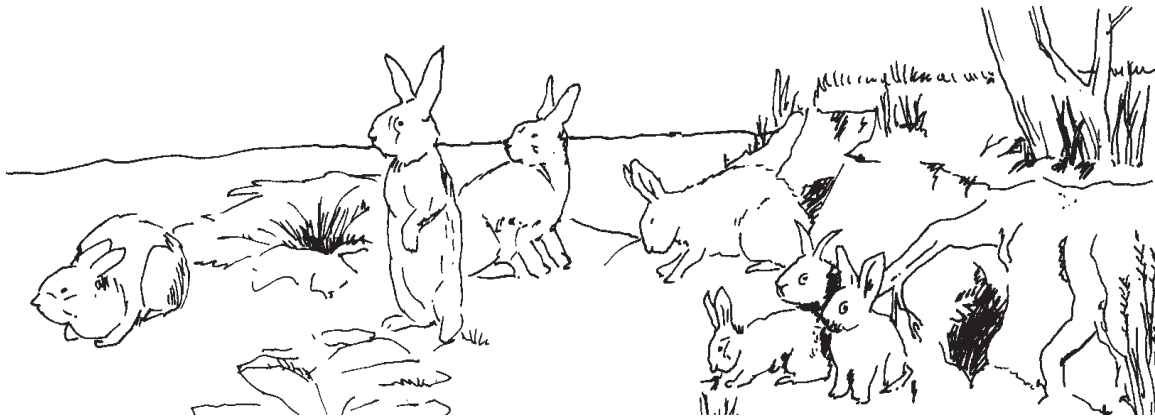
During the Neighborhood Exploration, the youth enjoy using cameras and creating a photo collage. They decide they would like to make a photo album of their activities, the gardeners, and the changes in the garden over the summer. At the end of the summer, they present the photo album to the gardeners.

Make a Sketchbook of Garden Plants

Several of the youth enjoy drawing. The group decides to create a poster of drawings of garden plants to give to the gardeners as a gift of appreciation. They talk to a local artist about scientific drawings. At the end of the program they present their poster to the gardeners.

Make a Collection of Pressed Plants from the Garden

During the Gardener Story, the youth learn that the gardeners would love to have children carry on their gardening traditions, but the children do not even know the names of the plants. The youth decide to create a book of pressed plants from the garden, labeling the plants and pointing out identifying features. They talk to a local botanist about the best way to press plants. They also copy the relevant Science Pages describing the different plants and include the copies in the book. They give the book to the gardeners to use when children visit the garden.



Build Bird Houses and Bat Houses

The garden manager mentions during the Community Garden Inventory that the garden used to have a bird house but it had to be taken down because it was falling apart. The gardeners say they would like to attract more birds and even bats to keep down the mosquitoes in the garden. The youth decide to make and install bird and bat houses. They research bird and bat houses on the Internet and contact a technology teacher who is willing to help with the project. The youth construct the houses and present them to the gardeners at a final garden celebration.

Create a Mural

During the Community Garden Inventory, the youth observe that the fence bordering the garden is covered with flaking paint and old graffiti. They talk with the gardeners about creating a mural and secure permission of the property owner to paint on the fence. The youth next search the Garden Mosaics website for photos of other community gardens with murals. They also look at Science Pages to get ideas for garden science concepts that might be displayed on a mural. They then contact a local artist and art teacher to help them work with the gardeners to sketch out a plan for the mural. Finally, they hold a mural day during which the youth and gardeners paint the pictures on the fence.

