

Garden Enhancement Action Projects

In the Garden Enhancement Action Project, youth make improvements or build something for the garden. For example, youth can construct raised beds or a compost system. Or they might want to help gardeners repair or paint a fence. The youth should ask the gardeners questions about what is needed in the garden during the *i-m-science investigations*. They should then use this information to decide what to build or improve as part of their 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 Garden Enhancement Action Projects

Build a compost system

Construct a bench

Arrange for mulch to be donated and delivered to the garden

Build a water collection system

Paint a picnic table or a fence

Paint a mural along a fence

Create and put up interpretive signs

Organize and participate in a day where youth help gardeners weed their plots

Build a raised bed

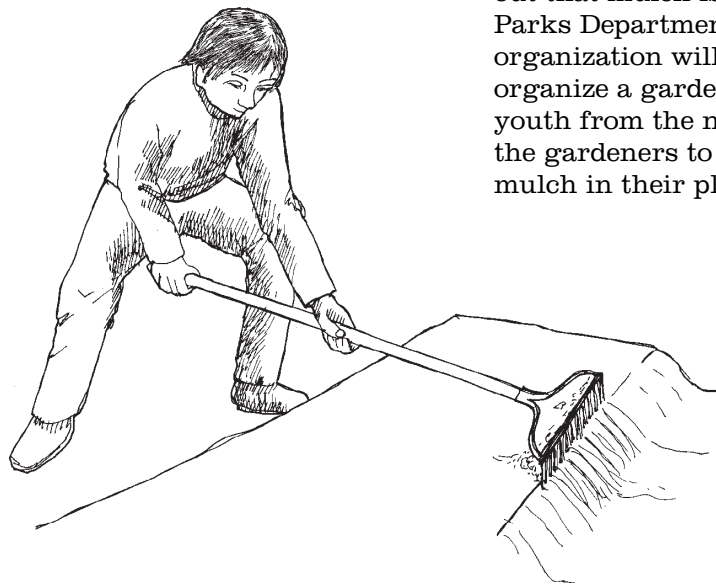
Plant flowers

Example Projects

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

Raised Beds

During the *i-m-science investigations*, the youth learn that the garden needs a wheelchair accessible raised bed. (Such a bed would need to be higher than the beds currently in the garden.) The youth ask the garden manager if they could meet with other gardeners and talk about ideas for the new bed. To prepare for their meeting, the youth read the *Raised Beds Science Page* and talk with an occupational therapist to learn about needs of people in wheel chairs. They also spend time observing in the garden to see what location might be best for the new bed. They make several phone calls to local hardware stores to figure out the cost of supplies. They then develop a design for the bed and present it to the gardeners and explain the different materials that could be used and their costs. They ask the gardeners to help them select which materials and location would be best. The youth obtain the materials and supplies and organize a work day to construct the bed. The gardeners get soil delivered from the city parks department to fill the bed.



Compost System

During the *i-m-science investigations*, the youth observe that gardeners are throwing weeds and clippings into the trash. They also note that the soils are gray and appear to lack organic matter. They discuss with the gardeners the possibility of building a compost bin to recycle the weeds and clippings. They use the *Composting Science Page* to learn about the science behind composting, and the Internet to learn how to construct a compost pile. Then they contact a local "Master Composter" from Cooperative Extension to speak with their group and the gardeners about different types of compost systems. They work with the gardeners to build a compost system from scrap lumber. Finally, they create a poster for the gardeners about how to maintain the composting system.

Mulch

During the *i-m-science investigations*, the youth observe that one gardener is mulching his plots, and that his plants seem to be healthier during hot, dry weather. The youth talk with the other gardeners and learn that they also would like to mulch their plots, but have not been able to find a source of mulch. The youth become familiar with different kinds of mulching through reading the *Mulch Science Page*. Next they contact a local greening organization that works with community gardens and ask them to help locate a source of mulch. It turns out that mulch is available through the Parks Department and the greening organization will deliver it. The youth organize a garden workday with other youth from the neighborhood. They help the gardeners to haul and spread the mulch in their plots.

Watering System

During the *i-m-science investigations*, the youth observe that the gardeners do not have access to the city water supply and obtain water from barrels located throughout the garden. The barrels get filled by rainwater, and so are empty during dry spells. They talk with an urban gardening expert to learn more about different types of systems used by gardeners to collect water. They notice that the casita in the garden has a sizable metal roof and might be perfect for collecting rain water. They discuss their ideas with the gardeners and present several options for constructing a rainwater collection system. Finally they help the gardeners obtain the materials and organize a workday to build the collection system.

Interpretive Signs

During the *i-m-science investigations*, the youth note that children's groups often visit the garden. They also observe that, due to their limited ability to speak English, the gardeners have a difficult time talking to the youth about their plants and planting practices. The youth ask the gardeners if they might work together to create interpretive signs for children visiting the garden. They talk with the gardeners about what would be the most important things they want the children to learn. They then use the appropriate Science Pages to learn more about the garden plants and practices, and laminate appropriate color Science Pages for posting in the garden. They also develop some of their own signs for the garden.

Plant Flowers

During the *i-m-science investigations*, the youth observe that on both sides of the entrance to the garden, there is a section of bare dirt that is at times dusty or muddy. They notice another garden during their Neighborhood Exploration that has a beautiful flower bed planted along the fence. They talk with the gardeners about putting in a flower bed on both sides of the entrance. The gardeners are interested and take a walk with the youth to observe the flower bed at the other garden. The youth obtain seeds through a local greening organization and then plant the flower bed with the gardeners.

Create a Mural

During the Community Garden Inventory, the youth observe that the fence on the side of the garden is covered with flaking paint and old graffiti. They talk with the gardeners about creating a mural and secure permission from 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 that are of interest to them 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.

