

## Classroom Management in the Garden

### *How to prevent chaos and remain sane*

Keeping everyone calm and focused while visiting the garden can be a challenge, especially if there is only one adult and 20 or more children. When they hit the fresh air, children tend to take off running, jumping, and shouting.

Teachers can maintain calm and focus during garden visits by using some garden classroom management techniques such as giving students explicit tasks and instructions about what to do when they reach the garden. This also enables the teacher to work with students in small groups when teaching how to plant seeds or how to weed.



These garden tasks do not have to be tedious, but instead should be a guided garden exploration. Garden tasks can also be tied to what you are teaching in math, language arts, or science. This is like a garden “do now,” but to keep anticipation high, we prefer to call it a garden scavenger hunt. See an example of a garden scavenger hunt sheet below.

Here are some tips to staying sane on garden visits:

- Give students directions about what they are expected to do in the classroom before going to the garden. Make sure everyone understands the expectations and give students the opportunity to ask questions.
- Make sure everyone has the necessary materials to complete the scavenger hunt before they leave the classroom. These could include a pencil, a ruler, a magnifying glass, a clipboard, or notebook.
- Allow students to work in pairs or small groups. Explain that they should help each other follow instructions and complete the scavenger hunt. This leaves the teacher free to work with one small group at a time.
- If you will be calling students over in small groups to work with you, explain in the classroom what you will be doing and how groups will be called.
- If your garden is in a courtyard or near the windows of other classrooms, explain and reinforce often that the garden is your outdoor classroom and that indoor voices should be used. For younger students, model some ways they could express excitement – jumping up and down silently – should they find something exciting like a worm or pill bug.

# Garden Scavenger Hunt Ideas

Here are some ideas for tasks to include in your weekly garden scavenger hunt. Tasks can be modified depending upon the age of the children and depending on what you are teaching in the classroom at the moment.

If you want children to revisit a plant or plants each week to keep track of growth, ask them to write their names on craft sticks or rocks and place them beside the plant(s) they are measuring or observing.



## Math:

- Pick a vegetable plant to measure and place your stick beside it. What type of plant is it? Measure the height and the width in inches. (Older students can measure in inches and centimeters.) On subsequent days, students measure the same plant and later graph its growth in the classroom. After a few weeks, older students can observe changes in the rate of growth and hypothesize reasons for the change.
- Measure the rain in a rain gauge. Students can later graph the amount of rain in the classroom. How does it compare to the previous week? Older students can observe the changes in the garden after little or much rain.
- Pick a vegetable and count the number of vegetables in a row. Students can put a stick beside a row and count again next time to see if there are any changes.
- With your partner(s) measure the perimeter, area, or volume of one garden bed. Older students can calculate the amount of soil in cubic feet and yards needed to fill the bed.
- What shapes can you see in the garden?
- What is the temperature of the soil today? What is the temperature of the air? What is the difference between the two? Older students can graph the soil and air temperatures and determine after a few weeks what impact they have on plant growth.

## Science:

- How has the garden changed since your last visit?
- Take a close look at a row of vegetable plants, even look under the leaves. Use a magnifying glass. Do you see any plants that might have a problem or do not look healthy? How can you tell? What do you think is happening?
- Look at one of your vegetable plants. What parts of the plant can you see? What part of the plant do you know is there but you cannot see? Where is this part? What part of the plant will grow next?

### *Science (continued):*

- Look for a creature that lives in your garden. What do you think it is? Where did you find it? What words would you use to describe it?
- What has the weather been like lately? Do you see any changes in the garden that could be caused by weather?
- Draw a picture of something new that you haven't seen in the garden before.
- Take a look at our compost. How does it look different from your last visit?

### *Language Arts:*

- Write five words that describe the garden today.
- Write the words for five things you see in the garden today.
- Write a sentence that describes how the garden has changed since last week.
- Write a paragraph to describe the garden today or describe how it has changed since last time.
- Write the opening paragraph for an essay to persuade someone to start gardening. In subsequent weeks, ask students to write supporting paragraphs and a conclusion.
- Write down some ideas to write a poem about the garden. Teacher can specify the type of poem: acrostic, haiku, concrete, rhyming, etc.
- Write a letter to Mother Nature telling her your thoughts about the garden today.

### *Sensory:*

- Find three different colors in the garden. What things are these colors?
- Find something smooth and something rough in the garden. Be sure to be very gentle when touching plants or creatures! What did you find?
- What sounds do you hear in the garden?
- Do you smell anything in the garden? What is it?
- What feelings do you have in the garden today?

*Send Your students on the “Most” Hunt*

Find the:

- Greenest, smallest, or largest leaf.
- Smoothest or roughest stone.
- Most twisted stick
- Weirdest bug
- Tiniest or biggest flower
- Most colorful plant
- Most unusual plant
- Smallest or biggest weed
- Prickliest or smoothest weed
- Reddest or most colorful rock
- Tallest plant

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

<p>Pick a vegetable plant to measure.</p> <p>My plant is a _____ plant.</p> <p>This plant is _____ inches high.</p> <p>This plant is _____ inches wide.</p> <p><i>(Place a stick with your name on it by the plant.)</i></p>	<p>Pick a rain gauge to measure.</p> <p>There are _____ inches of water in the rain gauge.</p> <p>Do you think that is a lot or a little rain?</p>
<p>Pick a different vegetable plant to measure.</p> <p>My second plant is a _____ plant.</p> <p>This plant is _____ inches high.</p> <p>This plant is _____ inches wide.</p> <p><i>(Place a stick with your name on it by the plant.)</i></p>	<p>Look for a creature that lives in your garden.</p> <p>What do you think it is? _____</p> <p>Where did you find it? _____</p> <p>Write a sentence that includes three words to describe it:</p>

What is different about the garden since your last visit?