musc Children's Health
Medical University of South Carolina

South Carolina School-based Sensory Garden Guide

Developed by:
MUSC Boeing Center for Children's Wellness

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Table of Contents

Introduction..... 02

What is a Sensory Garden, Why Develop One in Schools, and How to Use This Guide

Planning..... 03

Setting a Purpose, Building a Team, Site Considerations, and Planning Worksheets

Garden Design..... 09

SC Growing Zones, Plant Selection, and Incorporating the 5 Senses - Sight, Hearing, Touch, Smell, and Taste

Installation and Maintenance..... 22

Gathering Materials, Construction and Installation, Regular Care Schedule, Sustainability Practices, and Monitoring and Evaluation

Activities..... 25

Incorporating the Seasons, Incorporating Themes, and South Carolina Curriculum Alignment

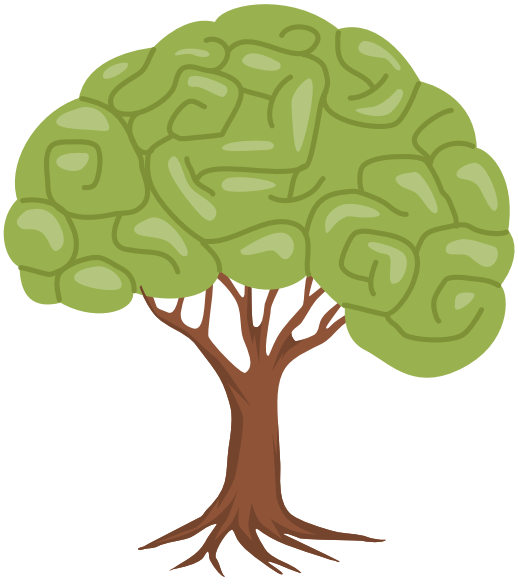
Sustainability..... 34

Community Engagement, Educational Resources and Signage, and Long-Term Vision and Goals

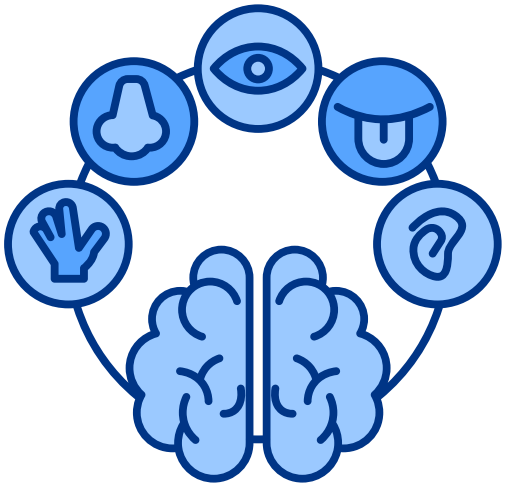
Additional Resources..... 37

Sample Sensory Garden Design, Create Your Own Design, Funding Resources, Journal Activities, and Helpful Links

Acknowledgments..... 47



Introduction



What is a Sensory Garden?

A sensory garden is a specially designed outdoor space that engages all five senses: sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste, to create a therapeutic and educational experience. Sensory gardens are accessible, inclusive environments that benefit all students. Additionally, they encourage hands-on learning and curiosity about nature for all students of varying abilities, fostering environmental awareness and a sense of responsibility.

Why Develop a Sensory Garden in Schools?

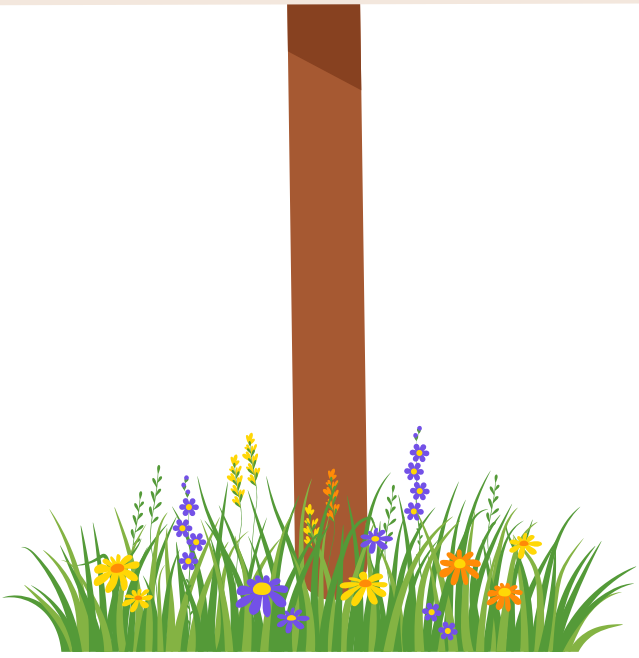
Sensory gardens enhance student wellness, encourage mindfulness, promote sensory development, and provide an interactive learning environment. They also support cross-curricular connections in science, art, and social-emotional learning. Sensory gardens increase staff wellness opportunities and align with the recommendations from the Boeing Center for Children's Wellness School-based Wellness Initiative. Overall, sensory gardens can provide an outlet for regulation following the evidence-based practices of Regulate, Relate, and Reason (The 3 R's) for helping students and staff regulate their emotions.

How to Use This Guide?

This guide was created to help South Carolina schools envision, design, and sustain sensory gardens that support student wellness, engagement, and learning. Whether you are a teacher, administrator, school garden coordinator, or community partner, this resource is meant to be both practical and inspiring. It walks you through the entire process from assessing your site and sourcing materials to selecting plants that stimulate the five senses and integrating sensory garden experiences into the school day.

Each section includes helpful tips, examples, and questions to consider as you plan a garden space that is inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and safe for all students. In addition, the guide highlights how sensory gardens can be used to support behavioral health, connect to academic standards, and foster a calming, restorative environment on school grounds. Whether you are just beginning or expanding an existing garden, this guide will support your efforts every step of the way.

Planning



Planning

Establish a School-based Team

Identify a planning team and schedule an introductory meeting. It is beneficial to include a variety of individuals with diverse roles at your school. Possible team members include:

- **School Administration**
  - Approve and support the project.
- **Teachers, School Counselors, Support Staff**
  - Integrate garden use into curriculum and SEL programs.
- **Maintenance Staff**
  - Provide input on the feasibility of upkeep and help plan sustainable features.
- **Students**
  - Involve student clubs in garden design, installation, and maintenance for ownership and learning.
- **Parents/Community Members**
  - Seek volunteer support, particularly from gardening clubs or community organizations.



Garden Team at EB Ellington Elementary School

Define Goals and Objectives

- When defining the goals for your sensory garden, outline the intended outcomes. These might include enriching sensory experiences for students, providing dedicated support for special education programs, promoting mental health and well-being, and establishing green spaces for relaxation and hands-on learning. This list isn't exhaustive, be sure to consider additional goals relevant to your school's unique needs. Utilize the Guiding Questions Document on page 7.
- Survey your school community to gauge their interest in a sensory garden. A sample interest survey can be found on page 43.

Select Site Location

- Start by choosing a location on school grounds, considering sunlight, accessibility, and proximity to classrooms.
- Ensure the site allows for sensory elements and accommodates all mobility needs. Schools may need to contact district personnel for this step.
- Call 811 before you dig, even for raised bed gardens. South Carolina law requires you to notify SC811 of your planned dig and have utility lines marked. By doing this, you prevent damages that could result in fines, utility service interruption, and even injury.
- Refer to the "Site Analysis Questions" on page 9 of your guide for a thorough evaluation of your potential garden location.

Accessibility and Ease of Use

Accessibility

- Accommodate changing needs and abilities for students, staff, and volunteers.
- Place raised beds at least 3' apart for accessibility.
- Make sure irrigation lines do not cross travel paths.
- Provide ADA (Americans with Disability Act) compliant travel paths to all or most raised beds from the building.
- Use concrete sidewalks or Plantation Mix (granite sand and 789 stone) for travel paths. Avoid turf, mulch, and sand for any travel path.
- Ensure sitting areas and tool storage areas are accessible.

Ease of Use

- Ease of use extends beyond just getting around the garden. It encompasses the overall comfort and safety of participants. Consider factors like:
  - Ergonomics: Are gardening tools easy to grip and use for various hand sizes and strengths?
  - Shade and Rest: Are there sufficient shaded areas and comfortable seating for breaks?
  - Visibility: Is the garden well-lit and are potential hazards clearly marked?
  - Water Access: Is water readily available and easy to access without excessive bending or reaching?

Create Preliminary Budget

- Develop a preliminary budget that includes:
  - specific plant selections and landscaping materials
  - hardscaping elements (pathways, raised beds)
  - seating and accessibility features
  - essential gardening tools and equipment
  - educational and informational signage
- Consider fundraising, grants, and partnerships with local businesses for financial support.
- See Appendix A for funding resources.

Sample Budget

Materials/Service	Cost	Quantity
Site Prep - Sub	$850.00	Per day
Plantation Mix 20 cy $94/cy	$94.00	Per cy, not installed
Vego beds $170/each x 2	$340.00	
Organic potting soil 23/cf/Vego	$506.00	11.00/bag
Orbit Smart batt operated hose timer	$45.00	
Micro Drip kit x 2 $36.98 each	$73.96	
½ inch Drip	$35.00	
Irrigation installation	$100.00	
Mulch	$25.00	
Plant Material 4-inch pots $5.00/each	$100.00	
Garden Tools	$500.00	
Seeds	$20.00	
TOTAL	**$2, 688.96**	

Planning

Planning Worksheet #1

Guiding Questions To Begin Planning Your Sensory Garden

- What is the primary purpose of this sensory garden?

- What school teams can help align your vision for a school-based sensory garden?

- Who will be the primary person responsible for building this sensory garden? Who is the backup person responsible for this sensory garden?

- What are your school/district policies on sensory garden installation?

- Where will this sensory garden be located at your school?

- What materials are need to get started?

Planning

Planning Worksheet #2

Task List

Activity	Person(s) Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Evaluation
Ex. Review School-based Sensory Garden Guide as a team	*School Leadership Team*	*Today*	*1 week from today*	*Team will meet again to discuss next steps after review*

Planning

Planning Worksheet #3

Site Analysis

- **Site History**
  - What is known about the site's past use or condition?

- **Site Surroundings**
  - What is the surrounding area like?

- **Site Topography**
  - What is the terrain like? Does the area flood?

- **Climate**
  - What are the sustaining weather patterns? Is there a constant breeze, how much shade, how much sunlight?

- **Orientation**
  - Which direction will the garden face? How many hours of sun will it get?

- **Existing Features**
  - Are there any notable features existing on the site?

- **Soil Conditions**
  - What is the soil like? Is there pollution underground? Will there need to be raised beds?

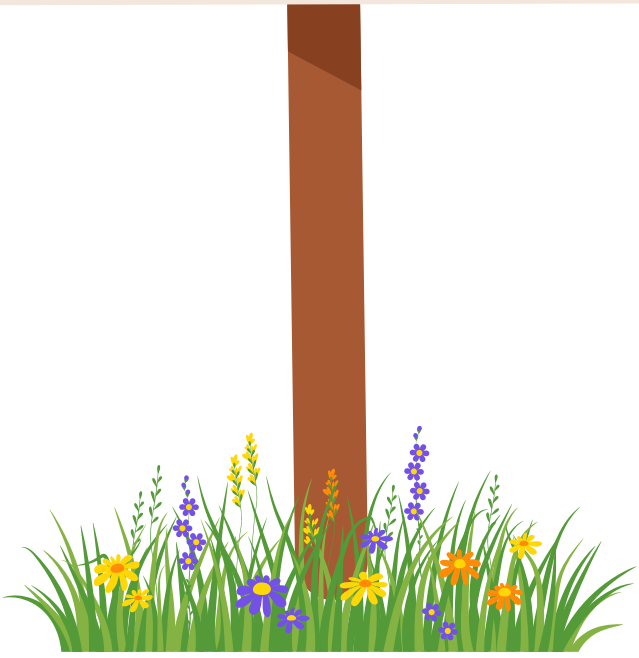
- **Utility Services**
  - What are the existing and proposed utility services underground? Have you called 811?

- **Water**
  - Where is water available? Can an irrigation system be installed?

- **Access, Staging, and Phasing**
  - What other constraints and opportunities are there?

Worksheet Adapted From: Kamp, D. (1996). Design Considerations for the Development of Therapeutic Gardens. Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture, 8, 6–10. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44025346

Garden Design



Garden Design

When planning a sensory garden in South Carolina, using plant hardiness zones helps in the selection of plants that can endure the local temperatures and seasonal changes, ensuring that your garden can thrive year-round and provide sensory experiences throughout the seasons. Due to the fact that most of South Carolina has a temperate climate, many sensory plants can be grown as an annual or a perennial.

Annuals

Annual plants complete their entire life cycle, from seed to flower to seed again, within a single growing season before they die. This cycle is repeated each year through the next generation of seeds. Plants that are considered re-seeding annuals are often ones that will drop their seeds at the end of the season and sprout the next year without assistance.

Perennials

Perennials live for more than two years, often for many years. They can bloom multiple times over their lifespan and don't need to be replanted each year. Typically, they survive through dormant seasons by storing energy in their roots or stems. Some perennials will maintain leaves, known as evergreens, and some will drop leaves but maintain above-ground woody branches and stems that regrow leaves and flowers the next season.

Herbaceous Perennials

Herbaceous perennials are a specific type of perennial. They die back to the ground in winter but regrow from their root system each spring.

Some plants can act as either annuals or perennials depending on the climate. This mainly depends on their hardiness or their ability to survive freezing temperatures. In mild climates, some plants survive year-round and function as perennials. However, the same plant in cooler climates may not withstand frost and will die at the end of the growing season.



Garden Design

Growing Zones

A successful sensory garden offers engaging sights, smells, textures, and tastes throughout the year, not just during peak growing seasons. When selecting plants, consider those that thrive in your region and provide seasonal variety.

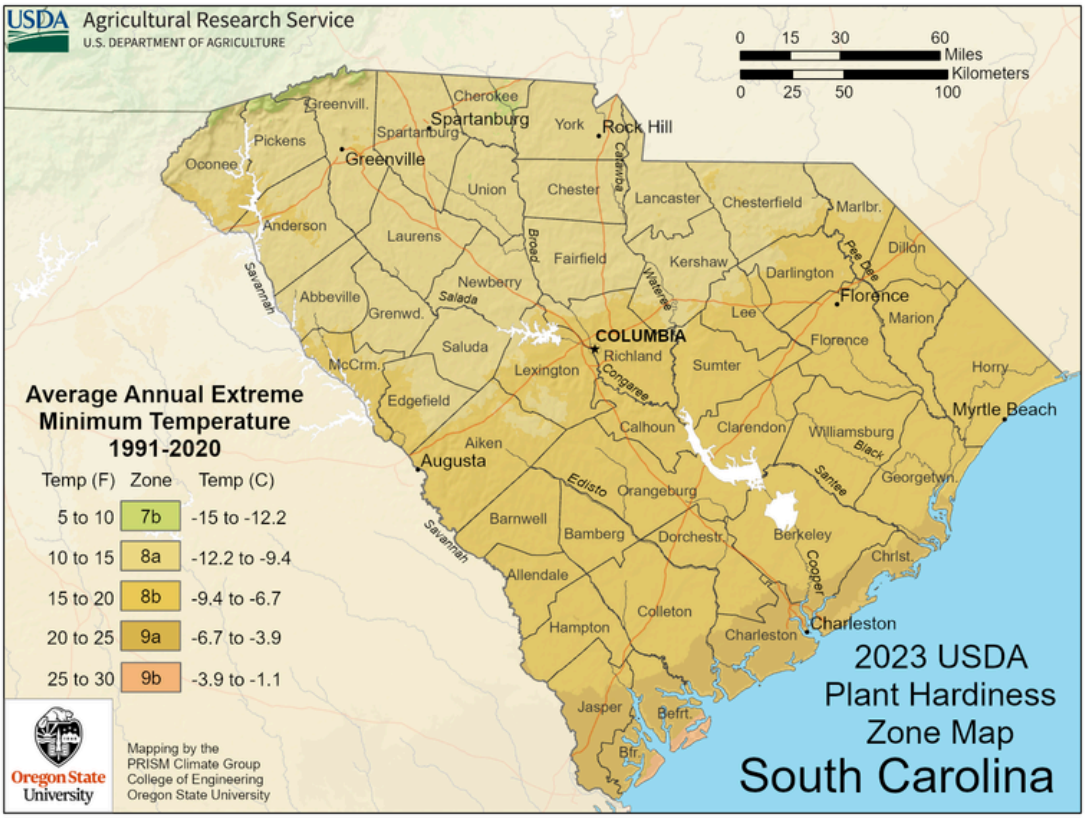
South Carolina spans several USDA Plant Hardiness Zones. Choosing plants suited to your specific zone ensures they can survive local winter temperatures and seasonal shifts.

South Carolina's Growing Zones:

- **Zone 7b** – Northern and mountainous regions (average low temperature: 5 to 10 °F).
- **Zone 8a** – Much of central South Carolina (average low temperature: 10 to 15 °F).
- **Zone 8b** – Southeastern and coastal areas (average low temperature: 15 to 20 °F).
- **Zone 9a** – Small coastal areas (average low temperature: 20 to 25 °F).

- Use the plant hardiness zone as a guide to select species that will survive and thrive in your area.
- Incorporate a mix of annuals and perennials to maintain visual and sensory interest across all seasons.
- Many sensory plants in South Carolina can be grown as either annuals or perennials, depending on location and care, flexibility that allows for both experimentation and reliability.

2023 South Carolina USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map



Source: Plant Hardiness Map: USDA (2023). https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/pages/map-downloads

Garden Design

Incorporating the 5 Senses: Sight

A sensory garden designed to stimulate the sense of sight should feature a vibrant mix of colors, shapes, and seasonal changes that invite visual exploration. Brightly colored plants such as zinnias, sunflowers, and marigolds can create eye-catching focal points, while varying the shapes and heights of the plants adds layers of visual interest. Incorporating artistic elements like student-made art, mosaic stepping stones, or painted birdhouses not only encourages creativity but also helps students observe and appreciate seasonal transitions. Additionally, choosing plants with changing foliage—such as spring-blooming flowers and autumn ornamental grasses—can help students learn about the natural cycles of the environment.

Annuals

Marigolds (Tagetes species) *



- **Zones**: 7-10
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: bright and cheerful colors
- **Notes**: Often grown through summer and into fall. Often a prominent feature in cultural ceremonies such as Diwali and Dios des los Muertos. Easy to grow and ideal for pollinator attraction.

Snapdragons (Antirrhinum multiflorum)



- **Zones**: 7-10
- **Seasons of Interest**: Spring, Fall, Winter (in mild climates)
- **Sensory Feature**: Unique dragon-shaped blooms in a variety of colors.
- **Notes**: Fun, interactive flower. Pinching the sides is a fun activity for students to open and close the flowers' "mouth". Left to dry, snapdragon seed pods take on the appearance of little skulls.

Sunflowers (Helianthus species)



- **Zones**: 7-10
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer
- **Sensory Feature**: Tall, bold yellow flowers that follow the sun
- **Notes**: Great for seed-starting activities; replant every few weeks for extended bloom time. Try Swamp Sunflower (Helianthus angustifolius) for a native perennial option.

Zinnia (Zinnia species)



- **Zones**: 7-10
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Vibrant, multi-colored blooms in a range of shapes and sizes.
- **Notes**: Easy to grow from seed. Excellent for attracting butterflies and creating color garden borders or cutting gardens.

*Contains levels of toxicity than can cause moderate gastrointestinal distress including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps if ingested

Garden Design

Incorporating the 5 Senses: Sight

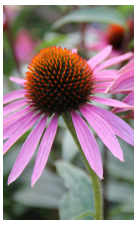
Herbaceous Perennials

Cockscomb (Celosia species)



- **Zones**: 7-8 (reseeding annual; perennial in Zones 9-10)
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Bright, crested blooms in vivid reds, pinks, and oranges
- **Notes**: Excellent for propagation and cutting activities; flowers can be dried for winter crafts.

Coneflower (Echinacea species)



- **Zones**: 3-9
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer, Fall, Winter
- **Sensory Feature**: Bold, daisy-like flowers in purple, pink, white, or yellow
- **Notes**: Long bloom time, drought tolerant (great for low maintenance garden), and attracts pollinators. Leave seed heads for winter bird food.

Butterfly Milkweed (Asclepias tuberosa) *



- **Zones**: 7-10
- **Seasons of Interest**: Spring, Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Bright orange blooms that stand out in pollinator beds
- **Notes**: Native species ideal for attracting monarchs and other butterflies. Avoid tropical milkweed (Asclepias currasavica) unless managed carefully, cut back by October to protect migrating monarchs.

Perennials

Coral Bells (Heuchera species)



- **Zones**: 3-9
- **Seasons of Interest**: Year-round
- **Sensory Feature**: Vibrant, multicolored foliage in shades of purple, lime, amber, and silver
- **Notes**: A semi-evergreen to evergreen groundcover that thrives in part to full shade. Provides beautiful color contrast year-round.

Corkscrew Rush (Juncus effusus 'Spiralis')



- **Zones**: 5-11
- **Seasons of Interest**: Year-round
- **Sensory Feature**: Twisting, spiral green stems that remain upright and are eye-catching.
- **Notes**: Prefers wet, boggy areas or containers.

*Contains levels of toxicity than can cause moderate gastrointestinal distress including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps if ingested

Garden Design

Incorporating the 5 Senses: Hearing

To engage the sense of sound in a sensory garden, incorporate natural and soothing auditory elements that invite students to pause and listen. Wind chimes and plants like bamboo that gently rustle in the breeze can create a peaceful atmosphere, encouraging moments of calm and reflection. Adding a small water feature, such as a fountain or bubbling rock, introduces the tranquil sound of flowing water, which can have a meditative effect. Creating a welcoming habitat for birds by using feeders also brings the joyful sounds of birdsongs into the garden. Each of these ideas offer students the chance to connect with nature through listening and observation.

Annuals

Love-in-a-Mist (Nigella damascena) *



- **Zones**: 5-8
- **Seasons of Interest**: Spring, Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Rattling seed pods in late summer
- **Notes**: Delicate blooms give way to papery seed pods that produce a gentle rattle as they dry.

Lagenaria Gourds (Lagenaria siceraria) *



- **Zones**: 2-11
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer, Fall, Winter
- **Sensory Feature**: Dried gourds used in musical play or shaken to hear seeds rattle
- **Notes**: Grow them up and over an arbor or arch for a whimsical entrance or walkway path. Mature gourds should be harvested when the stem withers and turns brown. Carefully wash gourds of dirt and apply disinfectant. Store in a dry place with good air circulation and indirect sunlight, spaced so they do not touch each other. Turn every few weeks until the seeds rattle inside.

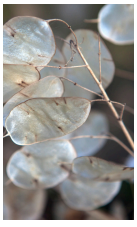
Sweet Corn (Zea mays)



- **Zones:** 2-11
- **Seasons of Interest**: Spring, Summer, and Early Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: The tall, broad leaves of sweet corn are a classic example of a plant that makes a gentle rustling sound in the wind. This is a great annual to plant for both sound and taste.

Herbaceous Perennials

Money Plant (Lunaria annua)



- **Zones:** 5-9
- **Seasons of Interest:** Spring, Summer (biennial: blooming in its second year)
- **Sensory Feature:** The dried, silvery seed pods make a gentle rustling or rattling sound when moved by the wind or shaken by a student. This is a subtle but very effective auditory element that ties into its other visual and tactile features.

*Contains levels of toxicity than can cause moderate gastrointestinal distress including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps if ingested

Garden Design

Incorporating the 5 Senses: Hearing

Herbaceous Perennials Cont.

False Indigo (Baptisia australis) *



- **Zones**: 3-9
- **Seasons of Interest:** Spring (flowers), Late Summer (rattling seed pods)
- **Sensory Feature:** Dry seed pods create a gentle, rhythmic rattle in the breeze.

Northern Sea Oats (Chasmanthium latifolium)



- **Zones:** 5-9
- **Seasons of Interest:** Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Flat seeds rustle and clatter in the wind
- **Notes:** Native grass with high sensory value and wildlife benefit.

Perennials

Pigsqueak (Bergenia crassifolia)



- **Zones**: 3-8
- **Seasons of Interest**: Year-round in zones 6-8
- **Sensory Feature**: Rubbing the leathery leaves produces a “squeaking” sound
- **Notes**: Fun interactive plant for children.

Pink Muhlygrass (Muhlenbergia capillaris)



- **Zones**: 5-8
- **Seasons of Interest**: Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Rustling movement in the breeze
- **Notes**: Adds soft pink haze and dynamic sound.

Switchgrass (Panicum virgatum)



- **Zones**: 5-9
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer-Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Wind movement produces a soft rustling sound
- **Notes**: Native ornamental grass.

Bamboo (Phyllostachys aurea) *



- **Zones**: 4-10
- **Seasons of Interest**: Year-round
- **Sensory Feature**: Hallow stalks knock and click in the wind
- **Notes**: Best planted in large containers to prevent spreading. Bamboo has very invasive tendencies so planting in the ground is not suggested.

*Contains levels of toxicity than can cause moderate gastrointestinal distress including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps if ingested

Garden Design

Incorporating the 5 Senses: Touch

To stimulate the sense of touch, a sensory garden should offer a variety of textures that invite hands-on exploration. Including plants with diverse surfaces such as the soft leaves of lamb's ear or the coarse feel of ornamental grasses encourages students to engage with nature through tactile discovery. Designated "touch stations" featuring smooth stones, bark, or sand provide additional opportunities for sensory interaction. Using natural materials like mulch, wood, and stone in walkways and seating areas not only enhances the garden's aesthetic but also allows students to experience different textures underfoot and through physical contact with their surroundings.

Annuals

Chenille Plant (Acalypha hispida) *



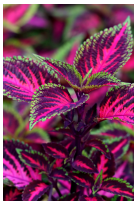
- **Zones**: 8-10 (can be grown indoors year-round)
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer, Fall (or year-round indoors)
- **Sensory Feature**: Long, fuzzy red flower spikes resemble soft chenille yarn
- **Notes**: Excellent as an indoor or container plant.

Strawflower (Xerochrysum bracteatum)



- **Zones**: 7-10 (often grown as an annual)
- **Seasons of Interest**: Spring, Summer
- **Sensory Feature**: Papery, crisp petals provide a unique dry texture
- **Notes**: Great for touch exploration and dried flower crafts.

Coleus (Plectranthus scutellarioides) *



- **Zones:** 7-10
- **Seasons of Interest:** Spring, Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature:** While known for its vibrant colors, many varieties of Coleus also have very interesting leaf textures. Some have ruffled or crinkled edges, while others have a more coarse, velvety feel.

Herbaceous Perennials

Cuban Oregano (Plectranthus amboinicus)



- **Zones**: 9-11 (annual in zones 8-9)
- **Seasons of Interest**: Spring, Summer
- **Sensory Feature**: Thick, fuzzy leaves with soft texture
- **Notes**: Heat-loving and aromatic, grows well in hot full sun areas. Great for both touch and smell.

Lambs-ear (Stachys byzantine)



- **Zones**: 4-9
- **Seasons of Interest**: Fall, Winter
- **Sensory Feature**: Silvery, velvety foliage- classic plant for tactile gardens
- **Notes**: Requires well-drained soil and performs well in partial shade.

Garden Design

Incorporating the 5 Senses: Touch

Herbaceous Perennials Cont.

Wormwood (Artemisia absinthium) *



- **Zones**: 3-9
- **Seasons of Interest:** Year-round
- **Sensory Feature**: Silky-silver, soft-texture foliage
- **Notes:** Works well in pots or garden beds; trim regularly to prevent legginess.

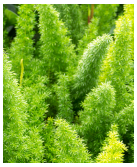
Perennials

Bunny Tail Grass (Lagurus ovatus)



- **Zones**: 4-10
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer-Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Soft, fluffy flower heads resembling rabbit tails
- **Notes**: Use caution as it has invasive tendencies.

Asparagus Fern (Sprengeri densiflorus)



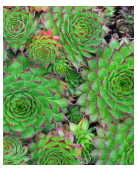
- **Zones**: 9-10 (annual in zones 7-8)
- **Seasons of Interest**: Spring-Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Fine, airy foliage with delicate touch
- **Notes**: Avoid ingestion of berries; suitable for pots and shaded beds.

Stonecrop Sedums (Sedum species)



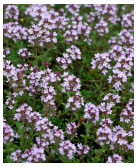
- **Zones**: 3-9
- **Seasons of Interest**: Spring-Fall (varies by species)
- **Sensory Feature**: Thick, rubbery succulent leaves
- **Notes**: Excellent for propagation activities and indoor gardens. Some varieties will die back in cold snaps.

Hens and Chicks (Sempervivum tectorum)



- **Zones**: 3-8
- **Seasons of Interest**: Year-round
- **Sensory Feature**: Firm, fleshy rosettes
- **Notes**: Spreads easily and thrives in containers or rock gardens.

Woolly Thyme (Thymus pseudolanuginosus)



- **Zones**: 5-8
- **Seasons of Interest**: Spring-Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Low-growing groundcover with soft, fuzzy texture
- **Notes**: Works well between stepping stones or along walkways.

*Contains levels of toxicity than can cause moderate gastrointestinal distress including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps if ingested

Garden Design

Incorporating the 5 Senses: Smell

To engage the sense of smell, a sensory garden should be filled with fragrant plants that invite students to breathe deeply and connect with their environment. Aromatic herbs such as lavender, mint, rosemary, and basil release rich, natural scents that encourage mindful interaction with the garden. Flowering vines like jasmine or honeysuckle can be planted near seating areas to create immersive pockets of fragrance, enhancing the overall sensory experience. Incorporating seasonal bloomers such as lilac or hyacinth ensures the garden offers changing and refreshing scents throughout the year, highlighting the beauty and variety of nature's aromas.

Annuals

Sweet Basil (Ocimum basilicum)



- **Zones: 7-10 (grown as an annual elsewhere)**
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Fragrant leaves release scent when touched or crushed
- **Notes**: Try fun varieties like lemon basil, cinnamon basil, Tulsi, and purple basil for diverse aromas.

Scented Geraniums (Pelargonium species)



- **Zones**: 7-10 (can be overwintered indoors)
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Leaves offer a range of scents ranging from pine, coconut, apple, and peppermint.
- **Notes**: Easy to grow from cuttings. Keep in pots for winter protection.

Curry Plant (Helichrysum italicum)



- **Zones**: 9-10 (Annual in zones 7-8)
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Aromatic curry-like scent from leaves
- **Notes**: Drought tolerant, but requires excellent drainage and full sun.

Sweet Alyssum (Lobularia maritima)



- **Zones:** 9-11 (annual in zones 7-9)
- **Seasons of Interest:** Spring, Summer
- **Sensory Feature**: This is a small, low-growing annual that produces a profusion of tiny flowers with a sweet, honey-like fragrance.

Dill (Anethum graveolens)



- **Zones:** 2-11
- **Seasons of Interest:** Spring, Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature:** The feathery, green foliage has a very strong and distinct aroma. It's a great contrast to the sweeter smells and is a plant many students may recognize from pickles or other foods.

Garden Design

Incorporating the 5 Senses: Smell

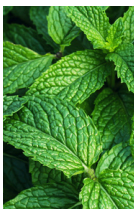
Herbaceous Perennials

Anise Hyssop (Agastache foeniculum)



- **Zones**: 5-10
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Leaves and flowers emit a sweet, licorice-like aroma
- **Notes**: Pollinator-friendly and also adds visual and tactile appeal.

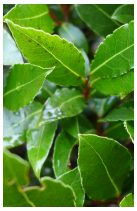
Mint Varieties (Mentha species)



- **Zones**: 7-10
- **Seasons of Interest**: Spring, Summer
- **Sensory Feature**: Leaves produce a strong, refreshing scent when rubbed
- **Notes**: Choose from peppermint, spearmint, chocolate mint, orange mint, and catmint. Best grown in containers to prevent spreading.

Perennials

Sweet Bay Tree (Laurus nobilis)



- **Zones**: 8-10
- **Seasons of Interest**: Year-round
- **Sensory Feature**: Fragrant leaves used in cooking, rich herbal aroma
- **Notes**: Thrives in pots; becomes a large bush over time.

Sweet Pepperbush (Clethra alnifolia)



- **Zones**: 3-9
- **Seasons of Interest**: Summer
- **Sensory Feature**: Highly fragrant white or pink flower spikes
- **Notes**: Native shrub that attracts pollinators and thrives in moist soil.

Rosemary (Saliva Rosmarinus)



- **Zones**: 8-10
- **Seasons of Interest**: Year-round (evergreen in mild climates)
- **Sensory Feature**: Strong, pine-like herbal scent from foliage
- **Notes**: Requires full sun and excellent drainage.

Spanish Lavender (Lavandula stoechas)



- **Zones:** 7-10
- **Seasons of Interest:** Spring, Summer
- **Sensory Feature**: Spanish lavender has a more pungent, slightly piney or herbaceous aroma. The scent is released when a student gently rubs the leaves, making it a very interactive and grounding experience.

Garden Design

Incorporating the 5 Senses: Taste

To engage the sense of taste, a sensory garden can include safe, edible plants that allow students to explore flavors and learn about where food comes from. Vegetables and herbs such as cherry tomatoes, mint, and basil provide hands-on opportunities for tasting, as long as they are properly cared for and safely handled. If space allows, fruit-bearing shrubs like blueberries or strawberries can be planted to help students observe and appreciate the food-growing process. For older students, incorporating harvested herbs or vegetables into simple classroom cooking activities extends the sensory experience and supports lessons on nutrition and healthy eating. However, it's important to note that some plants can be toxic if ingested. Always verify the safety of all plants included in the garden and supervise tasting activities closely.

Annuals

Nasturtiums (Tropaeolum species)



- **Zones**: 2-11
- **Seasons of Interest**: Spring, Winter (cool season grower)
- **Sensory Feature**: Peppery-tasting leaves and brightly colored edible flowers.
- **Notes**: Best seeded directly in early spring; adds color and flavor to salads.

Stevia (Stevia rebaudiana)



- **Zones**: Annual in Zones 6-7; herbaceous perennial in Zones 8-9
- **Seasons of Interest**: Spring, Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Intensely sweet leaves; natural sugar substitute
- **Notes**: Leaves can be dried and crushed for use in teas or desserts.

Swiss Chard (Beta vulgaris)



- **Zones**: 2-11
- **Seasons of Interest**: Year-round in mild climates
- **Sensory Feature**: Edible rainbow-colored stems and nutrient-rich leaves
- **Notes**: Thrives in cool and warm seasons; great for garden-to-table tasting.

Herbaceous Perennials

Pineapple Sage (Salvia elegans)



- **Zones:** 8-10
- **Seasons of Interest:** Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature:** Sweet, pineapple-scented leaves; flowers can be tasted like honeysuckle
- **Notes:** Attractive to pollinators and easy to grow in full sun.

Garden Design

Incorporating the 5 Senses: Taste

Herbaceous Perennials Cont.

Chives (Allium schoenoprasum)



- **Zones**: 4-8
- **Seasons of Interest**: Spring, Summer, Fall
- **Sensory Feature**: Edible leaves and flowers with mild onion flavor
- **Notes**: Harvest regularly by cutting to the base to encourage fresh growth.

Red Veined Sorrel (Rumex sanguineus)



- **Zones**: 4-8
- **Seasons of Interest**: Year-round in mild climates
- **Sensory Feature**: Tart, lemony-tasting leaves
- **Notes**: Beautiful foliage and tangy flavor make it great for salads and garnishes.

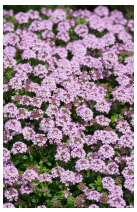
Perennials

Bronze Fennel (Foeniculum vulgare)



- **Zones**: 4-9
- **Seasons of Interest**: Year-round
- **Sensory Feature**: Sweet, licorice-flavored foliage and seeds
- **Notes**: Allow to flower to attract pollinators and produce edible seeds.

Creeping Thyme (Thymus serpyllum)



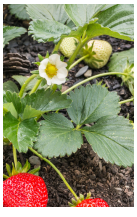
- **Zones**: 4-9
- **Seasons of Interest**: Year-round
- **Sensory Feature**: Edible leaves with mild thyme flavor
- **Notes**: Makes a fragrant, low-growing groundcover. Will need to be divided every few years.

Blueberry (Vaccinium corymbosum)



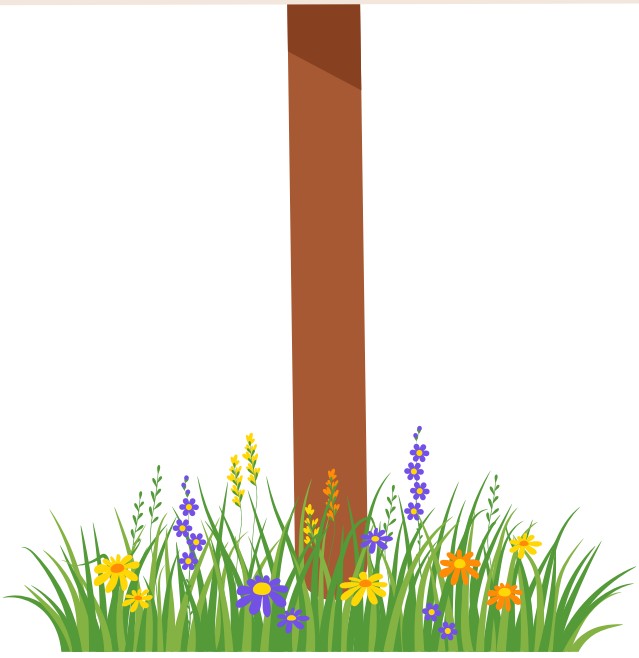
- **Zones**: 3-8
- **Seasons of Interest**: Year-round (berries in Summer)
- **Sensory Feature**: Sweet, edible berries
- **Notes**: Prune regularly to encourage fruiting; provides taste and visual appeal.

Strawberries (Fragaria ananassa)



- **Zones:** 5-9
- **Seasons of Interest:**
- **Sensory Feature:** Taste is the most powerful sensory experience of growing strawberries. The sweet, juicy flavor of a fresh-picked strawberry is a unique and highly satisfying reward.
- **Notes:** The plants generally need replacing every 3 to 4 years.

Installation and Maintenance



Installation

Gathering Materials

Using the design plan as a guide, select native plants that are hardy and aligned with the goals of this sensory garden. Be sure to include a diverse mix of textures, colors, and scents to engage the senses.

Key Materials To Consider

- **Planters or pots:** perfect for herbs and mobile sensory features
- **Compost and high-quality garden soil:** the foundation for healthy plant growth and to boost soil fertility
- **Mulch or straw**: crucial for moisture retention and weed control
- **Irrigation system or soaker hoses:** highly recommended given South Carolina's hot climate
- **Garden edging or borders**: used to define sensory zones, pathways, and planting areas
- **Storage shed or weatherproof bin:** protect gardening tools and materials
- **Pathway materials:** ensure accessibility with concrete sidewalks or Plantation Mix
- **Seating:** benches, tree stumps, and boulders
- **Enhancers:** water features, wind chimes, rain chains, painted rocks, etc.



Site Preparation & Groundwork

- Using your Site Assessment from page 9, confirm the site's readiness. This includes testing the soil, marking any underground utilities, and ensuring adequate drainage.
- Define the Layout: Use string lines, spray paint, and stakes to mark the precise locations of all raised beds, pathways, seating, and other structures according to the garden's design plan.

See Page 39 for detailed planting diagrams

Building & Infrastructure

- Prioritize building and installing all "hardscape" elements before planting begins. This includes: constructing raised beds, laying pathways, and assembling pathways.
- Integrate a watering system during this phase. Install soaker hoses or a drip irrigation system to ensure efficient and consistent watering.

Planting & Final Touches

- Coordinate Planting Sessions: Organize planting sessions with students and volunteers, ensuring you have a specific plan for what will be planted where.
- Mulching: Once planting is complete, apply a generous layer of mulch (such as natural wood chips or pine straw) to all garden beds.
- Install Non-Plant Sensory Elements: This is the fun part! Add elements that engage the other senses.

Maintenance

Maintenance is a crucial part of the garden's long-term success. Continual maintenance helps preserve the desired aesthetic and overall look of the space. It is important to develop a clear maintenance plan to meet those expectations. Be sure to identify specific tasks such as regular leaf removal and weed control. Also, consider potential investment needs, including automated irrigation systems, paved walkways, and secure tool storage.

Regular Care Schedule

- Develop a schedule for watering, pruning, and weeding, assigning roles to stakeholders, such as rotating student groups.



Sustainability Practices

- Can you include garden maintenance into a class or club? Incorporate rain barrels, composting, and drought-resistant plants to reduce the garden's environmental impact.



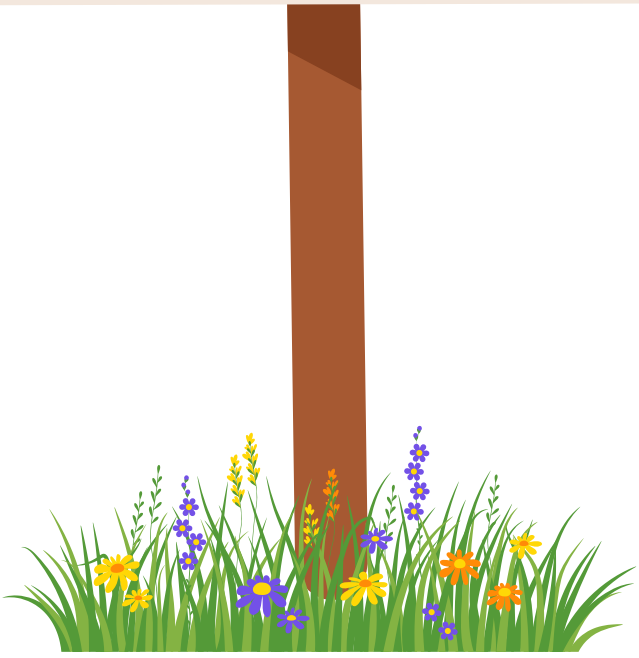
Monitoring and Evaluation

- Set up periodic assessments to monitor plant health, garden cleanliness, and continued engagement. Collect feedback from students and staff to adapt the garden based on their needs. Develop a follow-up survey to assess the effectiveness of your team's implementation of the sensory garden.

Sample Maintenance Schedule

Task Description	Supplies/Tools Needed	Estimated Time Needed	Frequency of Task
Water as needed, take rain into account	Garden Hose	10 minutes	2x Weekly
Weeding and Pruning	Gloves and Pruning Sheers	10 minutes	Weekly
Clean sensory items, windchimes, non living things	Soap, Brush and Garden Hose	30 minutes	Monthly

Activities





Activities

Incorporating the Seasons: Fall



When we return to school, the summer heat often lingers. If you've had volunteers maintaining the garden over the summer, you may still be harvesting as students arrive. Heat-tolerant plants such as peppers, eggplant, yard-long beans, zinnias, and sweet potatoes continue to thrive in South Carolina's warm fall weather.

Incorporate lesson plans that include fall observation walks. Encourage students to draw or write about what they see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. Practice mindfulness with simple breathing exercises- *smell the flowers and blow out the candles*.

- **Sight**:
  - Encourage students to become keen observers of the changing landscape. Study the vibrant transformations of deciduous trees and shrubs as their leaves turn brilliant shades of red, orange, and yellow.
  - Older students can keep garden journals or create visual guides to document changes in the landscape.

- **Hearing**:
  - Listen for the gentle rustle of tall ornamental grasses, the buzz of late-season bees, or the songs of migratory birds passing through.
  - You can also add simple wind chimes or a rain chain to a gutter to amplify the sounds of the wind and rain, teaching students about how natural elements create sound.
  - Encourage students to sit quietly and keep a sound journal, drawing what they hear or trying to identify the sources of different noises.

- **Touch**:
  - Let students experience the texture of soil and the grounding act of digging and pulling out spent summer plants.
  - Incorporate a nature rubbing activity. Have students place a leaf, a piece of bark, or a dried pod under a piece of paper and rub with a crayon to reveal its unique texture and pattern. This bridges the senses of touch and sight.

- **Smell**:
  - Herbs like rosemary and sage not only have strong, pleasant aromas but also offer a variety of textures to explore.
  - Also encourage students to take a big whiff of the earthy, rich smell of fresh compost or the sweet, subtle fragrance of late-blooming flowers. The smell of the garden after a rain shower is also a distinct and calming sensory experience.

- **Taste**:
  - The brief window of cooler temperatures before the first frost is ideal for growing sugar snap peas. These fast-growing vines produce sweet, fragrant flowers and crisp pods that are perfect for tasting.



Activities

Incorporating the Seasons: Winter



As the summer heat finally subsides, the sensory garden offers a peaceful escape during the school day. This season presents a unique opportunity to teach students about resilience and the quiet beauty of nature. The garden can be a calming, positive space, and a privilege for students who may benefit from quiet, one-on-one activities, such as direct-sowing seeds for cool-weather vegetables. This quiet work can be a powerful incentive and a positive tool for behavior management.

- **Sight**:
  - Allow plants to remain in place so students can observe their natural changes. Look for seed pods, changes in stem bark, and the shifting colors of leaves and flowers as they mature and fade.

- **Hearing:**
  - Encourage students to practice active listening. On a rainy winter day, listen to the rhythmic drumming of raindrops on a shed roof or the garden's leafy greens. Install a simple bamboo or metal wind chime to provide a soothing, melodic soundscape that changes with the wind's intensity.

- **Touch**:
  - Explore the texture differences between hardy plants like kale and more tender varieties such as Swiss chard. Let students experiment with water- pour it into shallow containers and leave it out overnight to observe it freezing into ice.
  - Encourage students to feel the temperature difference between cold, dormant soil and the cozy warmth of a well-mulched bed.

- **Smell**:
  - Focus on the aromatic evergreen plants that remain fragrant throughout the year. Have students gently rub the needles of a pine or cedar tree to release a burst of fresh, grounding scent. Rosemary, with its strong, herbaceous aroma and unique texture, is also an excellent plant for sensory exploration in the colder months. You can even bring a few sprigs indoors for a quick and calming sensory break in the classroom.

- **Taste**:
  - Cold-hardy vegetables like broccoli and cauliflower are great for cooking and tasting. You can supplement with store-bought produce for a classroom tasting experience. Collard greens work especially well when cooked in a crockpot with seasonings- offer hot sauce or vinegar on the side to enhance the flavor. Carrots can be enjoyed raw or roasted with a sprinkle of Parmesan.



Activities



Incorporating the Seasons: Spring and Summer

Spring brings renewed energy and excitement to the school garden. In the classroom, students can begin by sprouting seeds in damp paper towels placed in sunny windows. Outside, butterflies and pollinators begin to buzz about, and it's the perfect time to add floral plants to brighten the space.

- **Sight**:
  - Early bloomers like snapdragons and pansies thrive in South Carolina's mild winters and into early spring. Snapdragons are especially engaging- students enjoy gently squeezing their petals to make them "snap."

- **Hearing**:
  - Encourage students to listen actively for the buzzing of early pollinators like bees and butterflies visiting blooming flowers. Consider incorporating a simple, child-safe water feature, like a small, bubbling fountain or a rain barrel with an overflow, to add the calming sounds of trickling water, enhancing the garden's natural soundscape.

- **Touch**:
  - Encourage students to gently explore the emerging softness of young leaves, the velvety feel of new flower petals (like pansies), or the fuzzy stems of developing plants. They can also feel the different textures of smooth pebbles, rough bark pieces, or even the unique surface of a worm as they help turn the compost.

- **Smell**:
  - Plant fragrant herbs and flowers such as lavender, mint, lemon balm, basil, pineapple sage, catnip, thyme, and anise hyssop. These aromatic additions engage the senses and attract pollinators.
  - Guide students through the garden, pausing at specific fragrant plants. Encourage them to lightly touch or bruise a leaf (where appropriate and safe) to release its oils. Discuss the different types of smells: herbaceous, sweet, citrusy, spicy, and earthy. Which smells are calming? Which are invigorating?

- **Taste**:
  - Introduce students to the surprising flavors of edible flowers like pansies, violas, or nasturtium blossoms. Pansies offer a mild, slightly sweet flavor, while nasturtiums deliver a peppery kick. (Always ensure flowers are specifically grown for consumption, are free of pesticides, and washed before eating).

South Carolina's summer heat can begin before the school year ends. Prepare your garden for the hot months by creating a low-maintenance plan. Include a summer watering schedule and consider enlisting volunteers or student groups to help keep plants thriving during the break.

Activities

Incorporating Themes

Designing a garden around a specific theme is a fun and engaging way to connect students with plants, food, and the natural world. Themed gardens can tie directly into classroom lessons, cooking activities, or cultural celebrations. A snacking garden might include easy-to-pick vegetables like cherry tomatoes, snap peas, or strawberries, while a fall holiday garden could feature pumpkins, gourds, and colorful ornamental corn. For younger children or pet-friendly spaces, a pet-safe garden with non-toxic plants and gentle herbs like catnip or parsley adds another layer of purpose. Themed gardens not only make planning more intentional but also spark curiosity, storytelling, and hands-on learning opportunities throughout the growing season.



Pizza:
tomatoes, peppers, parsley, oregano, basil, onions



Salsa:
tomatoes, peppers, hot peppers, cilantro, tomatillo, onions, garlic



Pasta:
tomatoes, garlic, sugar snap peas, eggplant, squash,



Greens
arugula, spinach, broccoli, chard



Herbs:
parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme, tarragon, basil



Snacking:
cherry tomatoes, baby carrots, pickling cucumbers, sugar snap peas, popcorn



Pets:
carrots, catnip, lettuce, spinach, greens, corn



Fall Holiday:
pumpkins, ornamental corn, gourds



Mr. McGregor's Garden:
peas, radishes, lettuce, onions, lavender, cucumbers, parsley

Activities

Curriculum Alignment

HEALTH	
Standard 1: Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.	Kindergarten-2nd Grade: Explore how different plants in the sensory garden (e.g., fragrant flowers, textured leaves) contribute to our well-being. Discuss the role of sensory experiences in reducing stress and promoting emotional health.
	Grades 3-5: Explore how sensory gardens support emotional health by reducing anxiety and improving mood. Discuss the calming effects of nature and the importance of spending time outdoors for mental wellness.
	Grades 6-8: Examine the positive effects of engaging the senses (sight, smell, touch, and hearing) in a garden and how it reduces stress, improves focus, and supports mental health. Discuss the science behind why nature calms and refreshes the mind.
	Grades 9-12: Research the benefits of sensory gardens on mental and emotional health, including how exposure to natural environments can reduce symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. Students could compare sensory garden experiences with other forms of relaxation or therapy.
Standard 7: Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.	Kindergarten-2nd grade: Practice mindfulness exercises or deep breathing in the sensory garden, focusing on the soothing sounds of the garden or feeling the different textures of plants.
	Grades 3-5: Teach students how spending time in nature, particularly in a sensory garden, can help them manage feelings of frustration or anxiety. Engage students in gardening tasks that promote physical movement and relaxation.
	Grades 6-8: Guide students in using the sensory garden to practice grounding techniques, mindfulness, or deep breathing exercises. Discuss how these activities help improve concentration and emotional resilience.
	Grades 9-12: Encourage students to use the sensory garden as a tool for stress management during finals or intense school periods. Have them incorporate physical activities, like yoga or stretching, as part of their time in the garden to help with relaxation.
Standard 8: Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.	Kindergarten-2nd grade: students can create a simple project or drawing to show how the sensory garden helps them feel calm and healthy, then share it with the class or with their families.
	Grades 3-5: Have students write about or present to the class how sensory gardens can be used to promote mental health, advocating for more such spaces in schools or local communities.
	Grades 6-8: Have students create awareness campaigns or presentations to educate others about the importance of sensory gardens for mental health and stress reduction, advocating for their integration into school or community spaces.
	Grades 9-12: Challenge students to organize or lead a campaign promoting the benefits of sensory gardens in schools or local parks, focusing on their impact on reducing mental health struggles like anxiety or stress.

Activities

Curriculum Alignment

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA)	
Standard K.W.2: Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts.	After exploring the sensory garden, students can create drawings and simple writings describing their observations or feelings, enhancing their expressive abilities.
Standard 1.RL.4: Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.	Reading poems about nature, students can connect descriptive language to their sensory experiences in the garden, deepening their understanding of literary devices.
Standard 2.W.2: Write informative/explanatory texts introducing a topic and using facts to develop points.	After researching plants, students can write reports on their chosen species, integrating factual information gathered from the garden.
Standard 3.SL.4: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details.	Students can research a sensory garden and present their findings about the garden to classmates, practicing public speaking and descriptive language.
Standard 4.W.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	Students can write detailed guides or brochures about the sensory garden, considering how to inform and engage their audience effectively. This is a great activity to share with parents.
Standard 5.RI.7: Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.	Students can research various plants suitable for the garden using multiple resources, developing efficient information-gathering techniques.
Standard 6.W.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.	Students can compose essays on the ecological benefits of sensory gardens, organizing information gathered from their experiences and research.
Standard 7.RL.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings.	Exploring poetry that uses garden imagery, students can interpret figurative language and relate it to their sensory observations.
Standard 8.W.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.	Students can develop persuasive essays advocating for the expansion of the sensory garden, using evidence from their experiences and research.

Activities
Curriculum Alignment

SCIENCE	
Standard K-LS1-1: Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.	Students observe and document the basic needs of plants in the sensory garden, noting how sunlight, water, and soil contribute to growth.
Standard 1-LS3-1: Make observations to support an evidence-based claim that most young are like, but not exactly like, their parents.	By planting seeds and observing plant growth, students compare offspring to parent plants, noting similarities and differences.
Standard 2-LS2-1: Plan and conduct an investigation to determine what plants need to grow	Students experiment with different variables in the garden, such as varying amounts of water or light, to understand optimal plant growth conditions.
Standard 3-LS1-1: Develop and use models to describe how organisms change in predictable patterns during their unique and diverse life cycles.	Students create models or diagrams depicting the life cycles of plants grown in a sensory garden, from seed germination to maturity.
Standard 4-LS1-1: Construct an argument that plants and animals have internal and external structures that function together in a system to support survival, growth, behavior, and reproduction.	Through hands-on exploration, students examine plant parts in the garden, discussing how structures like roots, stems, and leaves contribute to a plant's survival and reproduction.
Standard 5-LS1-1: Support an argument with evidence that plants obtain materials they need for growth mainly from air and water.	Students investigate how plants in the sensory garden utilize air and water, conducting experiments to observe processes like photosynthesis and transpiration.
Standard 6-ESS3-2: Analyze and interpret data on natural hazards to identify patterns, which help forecast future catastrophic events and inform the development of technologies to mitigate their effects.	Students show how natural events, such as droughts or floods, could impact the sensory garden and discuss strategies to protect and sustain plant life during such events.
Standard 7-LS2-5: Evaluate competing design solutions for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services.	Students design different layouts for the sensory garden aimed at promoting biodiversity, then assess which designs best support a variety of plant and animal life.
Standard 8-LS1-4: Use arguments, based on empirical evidence and scientific reasoning, to support an explanation for how characteristic animal behaviors and specialized plant structures affect the probability of successful reproduction of animals and plants respectively.	Students observe pollinators interacting with plants in the garden, analyzing how specific plant structures and animal behaviors facilitate reproduction.

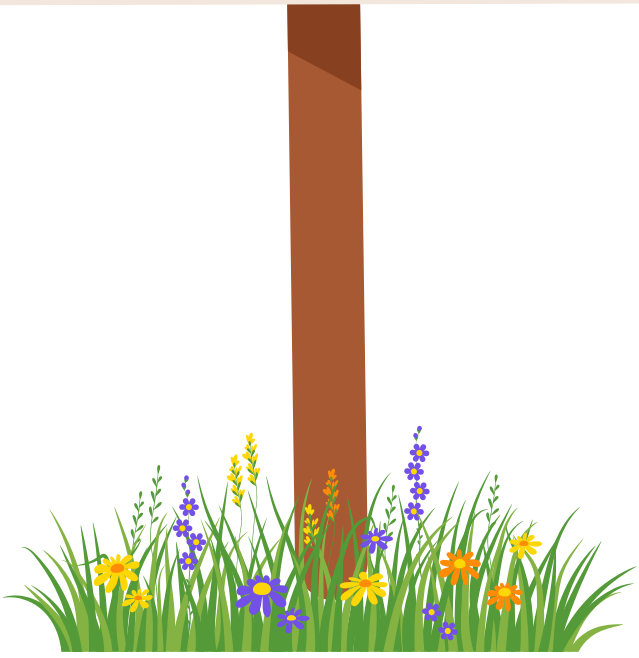
Activities

Curriculum Alignment

Biology	
Standard H.B.6A.2: Analyze and interpret data to explain how environmental factors (such as light, temperature, and water) affect the rate of photosynthesis.	Students can investigate how varying light conditions in different parts of the sensory garden influence the photosynthetic rates of selected plants.
Standard H.B.6B.1: Develop and use models to explain how plants capture and store energy through photosynthesis.	By cultivating diverse plant species, students can model and observe the processes of energy capture and storage, enhancing their understanding of photosynthesis.
Environmental Science	
Standard H.E.6A.1: Analyze and interpret data to predict how changes in environmental conditions can affect ecosystems.	Maintaining the sensory garden allows students to monitor environmental changes, such as soil moisture and temperature, and assess their impacts on plant health and ecosystem dynamics.
Standard H.E.6B.2: Design, evaluate, and refine solutions for reducing human impacts on the environment and biodiversity.	Students can implement sustainable gardening practices, such as composting and water conservation, to minimize the garden's ecological footprint and promote diversity.
Earth Science	
Standard H.E.3A.4: Analyze and interpret data to explain the effects of human activities on soil quality and erosion.	Through the sensory garden, students can study soil composition, implement erosion control measures, and observe the outcomes of various soil conservation techniques.
Standard H.E.3B.3: Develop and use models to explain how water cycles through the Earth's systems.	Students can gain practical insights into the water cycle and its significance in sustaining plant life by designing and managing the garden's irrigation system or plan.

For a complete list of the South Carolina state standards, visit South Carolina Department of Education at ed.sc.gov/instruction/standards

Sustainability



Sustainability

Sustainability ensures that the sensory garden remains a thriving, impactful space for years to come. By using environmentally friendly practices and fostering community involvement, we not only care for the garden itself but also teach students the value of stewardship, responsibility, and connection to the natural world. A sustainable garden supports biodiversity, reduces waste, and becomes a living example of how small actions can lead to lasting change.

Community Engagement

School and Community Events

Maximize visibility and participation by incorporating the sensory garden into existing school events such as spring festivals, open houses, or family nights. Hosting a dedicated annual "Garden Day" is another excellent opportunity to celebrate progress, engage families, and collaborate with local organizations or volunteers who may wish to support the garden in the long term.

Events Ideas:

- Invite families and local partners to help with planting days or seasonal maintenance.
- Offer student-led tours or sensory activities during events.
- Highlight student projects and contributions to the garden.

Educational Resources and Signage

Use the garden as a living classroom. Install educational signs that explain plant types, sensory experiences (touch, sound, smell, sight, and taste), and eco-friendly practices such as composting, water conservation, or pollinator support. This can be a meaningful project for student clubs, art classes, or science groups.

Suggestions:

- QR codes linked to digital resources or student-created videos.
- Multilingual signage to make the space more inclusive.
- Rotating or seasonal displays to keep the garden interactive and fresh.



Sustainability

Long-Term Planning

6-Month Goals:

- Form a Garden Committee made up of staff, students, and community members.
- Develop a basic maintenance plan and assign roles.
- Begin student engagement through classroom projects, garden visits, and sign creation.

1-Year Goals:

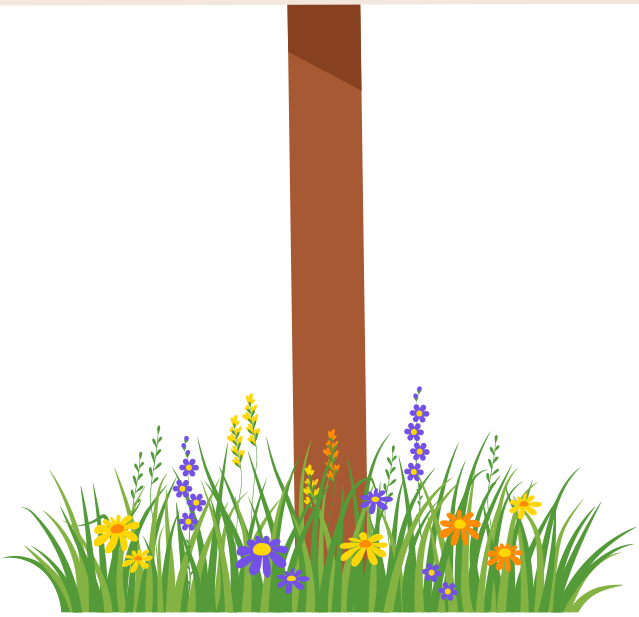
- Host the first annual “Garden Day.”
- Evaluate which plants and features are thriving and which need adjusting.
- Secure partnerships with local garden clubs, farms, or nurseries.
- Expand educational use with curriculum ties in science, art, and SEL.

3-Year Goals:

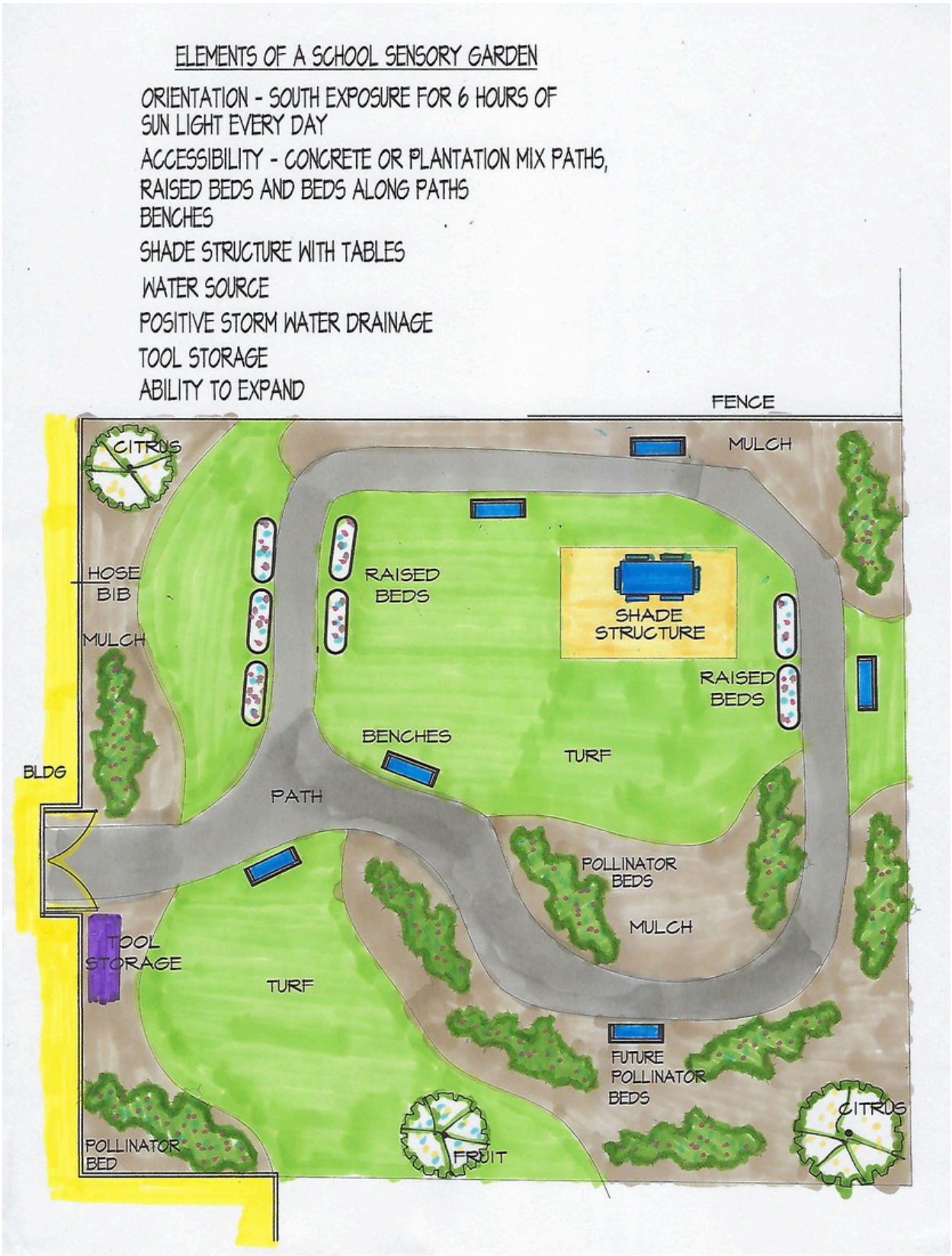
- Expand the garden to include new features (e.g., raised beds, outdoor classroom space, pollinator zones).
- Offer professional development for teachers on using the garden instructionally.
- Create a student leadership or ambassador program for garden upkeep and peer education.
- Sustain the garden through grants, PTA support, or district initiatives.



Additional Resources



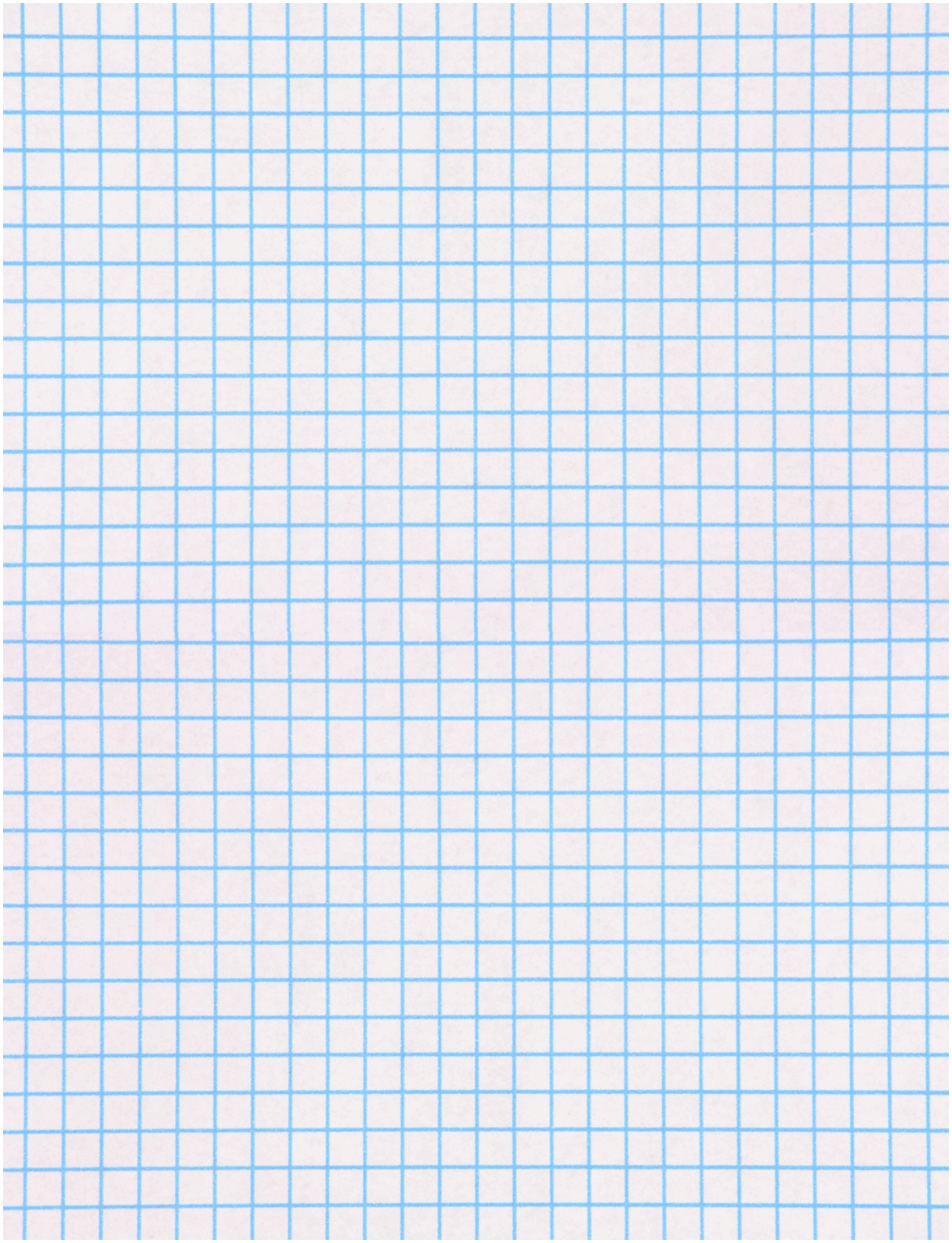
Sample Sensory Garden Design



Rendering developed by Noni Langford, MUSC Urban Farm Manager

Create Your Garden Design

Use the grid below to sketch your own sensory garden layout. Include paths, plant areas, seating, and sensory features to bring your vision to life.



Funding Resources

The table below includes examples of funding opportunities. Use this table with your school-based team for planning.

Click the web links below the Grantor names for their websites and more information.

Grantor	Purpose & Key Words	Grant Due Date
SC Dept. of Education: Web Link	School Garden and Education Assistance Program	December
GroMoreGood Grassroots Grant: Web Link	Garden Enhancement	January
Youth Garden Grant: Web Link	School Garden Project	Fall
Lowe's Hometowns: Web Link	Community spaces	February
Whole Foods: Web Link	Whole Kids	March
Trident United Way - Day of Caring: Web Link	Any School Garden Project	Fall
Bee Cause Project: Web Link	Pollinator plants	October
SC Forestry Commission: Web Link	Food forest and other funding	September
Seed Money: Web Link	Garden Supplies	November

Be sure to claim points on the School Wellness Checklist for the resources you receive for your garden.

- Sustainability #1 and #2 for grants
- Sustainability #6 for community partnership for time, services and/or items donated
- Sustainability #7 for a monetary donation

K-2 Sensory Garden Discovery Sheet

Name:

Date:

My Garden Adventure

Today I Used My 5 Senses!

I Saw

Colors I found:



- ☐ Red
- ☐ Green
- ☐ Orange
- ☐ Blue
- ☐ Yellow
- ☐ Purple

Draw something you noticed in the garden.



I Heard

☐ Birds ☐ Bees ☐ Wind ☐ Water ☐ Wind Chimes ☐ Other

I Touched

What felt interesting?

My favorite texture was:

☐ Soft ☐ Fuzzy ☐ Rough ☐ Smooth ☐ Bumpy

I Smelled

☐ Flowers ☐ Herbs ☐ Soil ☐ Rain ☐ Something else



How did the garden make me feel?

☐ Calm ☐ Happy ☐ Curious ☐ Relaxed ☐ Excited

One thing I learned today:

Grades 3-5 Garden Scientist Journal

Name:

Date:

Sensory Garden Observation Guide- Page 1

Weather:



☐ Sunny ☐ Rainy

☐ Cloudy ☐ Windy

Observation Station #1: What Do I Notice?

Choose one plant.

Describe it:

Color(s):

Height:

Interesting Features:

Using My Five Senses

Sight: What caught your attention?

Hearing: What sounds did you hear?

Touch: Describe your favorite texture felt in the garden today.

Smell: How would you describe the scents your smelled in the garden today?

Grades 3-5 Garden Scientist Journal

Sensory Garden Observation Guide- Page 2

Pollinator Watch
Did you observe:

☐ Butterfly ☐ Bee ☐ Bird ☐ Beetle ☐ Other:

What was it doing?

Wellness Reflection
The garden helped me feel:

☐ Calm ☐ Focused ☐ Creative ☐ Connected to Nature ☐ Relaxed

Why?

Garden Scientist Question
One question I still have:



Middle School Sensory Garden Field Journal

Name:

Date:

Observation, Wellness, and Science Investigation- Page 1

Environmental Conditions

Temperature:

☐ Cool ☐ Warm ☐ Hot

Weather:

☐ Sunny ☐ Rainy

☐ Cloudy ☐ Windy

Plant Investigation

Choose one plant. Plant Name:

Describe its characteristics:

Sight:

Touch:

Smell:

Adaptation Observation

How do you think this plant is adapted to survive in South Carolina?

Biodiversity Survey

Record the living things you observe:

Organism	Bees 	Butterflies 	Birds 	Other Insects 	Other
Number Seen					

What evidence suggests pollination is happening?

Middle School Sensory Garden Field Journal

Name:

Date:

Observation, Wellness, and Science Investigation- Page 2

Mindfulness Reflection

Spend one minute sitting quietly.
What sounds did you hear?

What did you notice after slowing down?

Data Collection

Mark all plant stages observed:

- ☐ Seed
- ☐ Sprout
- ☐ Leaf Development
- ☐ Flowering
- ☐ Fruiting
- ☐ Seed Production

Scientific Reflection

What does today's observation suggest about plant growth, pollinators, or garden health?

Action Step

Based on your observations, what should the garden team do next?

- ☐ Water
- ☐ Weed
- ☐ Harvest
- ☐ Mulch
- ☐ Plant More
- ☐ Monitor Again

Why?

Additional Resources

Planning Resources

- School-Focused Garden Interest Survey - Web Link
- Creating a Sensory Garden - Web Link
- Sensory Gardens: NC State Design Natural Learning Initiative - Web Link
- Sensory Garden Sample Budget Example - Web Link
- Clemson University's Planning a Garden Fact Sheet - Web Link

Design and Planting Resources

- Growing Guide: Sensory Garden Plants - Web Link
- Roots in Nature: School Garden Program with a Therapeutic Approach - Web Link
- Outdoor Learning Station: Sensory Garden - Web Link
- Engaging Sensory Systems in the Garden - Web Link
- Sensory Garden Plants & Their Therapeutic Benefits - Web Link
- Seed Your Future - Web Link
- The Lisa Libraries - Web Link
- Vego Raised Beds - Web Link
- Charleston Community Development & Revitalization: sign up for monthly grant alerts - Web Link
- South Carolina Native Plant Society - Web Link
- Clemson School Gardening for SC Educators - Web Link

Lessons and Activities

- Learning to Learn with the Garden - Web Link
- Engaging Sensory Systems in the Garden - Web Link
- Mindfulness in the Garden - Web Link
- Sensory Sensation Activities - Web Link
- Growing a Knowing Nose: A Scent Lesson - Web Link
- Just the Right Amount of Structure - Web Link

Research Articles

- Horticulture therapy program for improving emotional well-being of elementary school students: an observational study - Web Link
- Design Considerations for the Development of Therapeutic Gardens - Web Link

Acknowledgments

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2024-2025 Pilot Schools



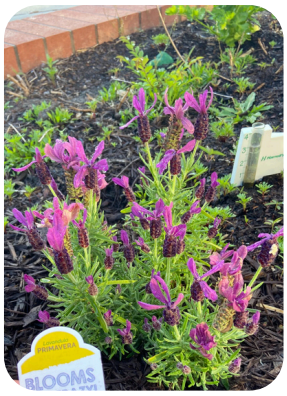




C.E. Williams North Middle
C.E. Williams South Middle
Charles Pinckney Elementary
Charleston Progressive Academy
EB Ellington Elementary
Edith Frierson Elementary













2024-2025 Pilot Schools











Harbor View Elementary
Malcolm C. Hursey Montessori
Midland Park Primary
Moultrie Middle
Northwoods Middle
Stono Park Elementary









Notes

Notes

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