



Lesson Five

Art in the Garden

Lesson Overview

This lesson teaches children & youth how use materials from nature and turn them into fun and beautiful projects for the garden. For example, plants can be used for decoration, for making twine or fiber, and for dyeing.

Lesson Objectives

Participants will explore different art techniques such as stamping and painting

Participants will make educational signs for the garden

Participants will learn how to process plants so that they can be used for making paints and dyes.

Time Needed

1 hour

Staff Needed

2 Garden Educators

Introduction to Lesson Five

Plants and Their Uses

This lesson is both an opportunity to be creative, and a time to discuss the many uses of plants. **Plants can be used for food, for medicine, for fuel, and for fiber.** **Plants can also be used for decoration, ritual, and ceremony.** These are the most common ways that humans have used plants throughout our existence.

Ask participants — Are there any ways you use plants for medicine, for fuel, for fiber, for decoration, rituals or ceremonies? Some common ones today are giving and receiving flowers/bouquets at funerals, on birthdays or other celebrations.

In future lessons we will talk more about the food system and how food gets from the farm to the table, but during this lesson we can also discuss how many common non-food items we use are made from plants

Ask participants — Where do our clothes come from?

Show pictures of various fibers; cotton, wool, silk and their sources. Most participants have very little knowledge about how plant material can be turned into thread, yard, cloth, and then clothing. Look at clothing labels, note that most of our clothing is now produced in huge factories and most of the materials are synthetic.

LINEN FIBRE TYPE: Natural
ORIGIN: Flax Plant
USED FOR: Trousers, suits, dresses
APPEARANCE: Natural



COTTON FIBRE TYPE: Natural
ORIGIN: Cotton Plant
USED FOR: shirts, , denim
APPEARANCE: Smooth



SILK FIBRE TYPE: Natural
ORIGIN: Cocoon of the silk moth
USED FOR: dresses, ties, shirts
APPEARANCE: very smooth & glossy



WOOL FIBRE TYPE: Natural
ORIGIN: Sheep
USED FOR: jumpers, hats, suits, carpets
APPEARANCE: soft and coarse



NYLON FIBRE TYPE: Synthetic
ORIGIN: Chemically produced, Coal, air, water
USED FOR: sportswear, tights, carpet
APPEARANCE: usually shiny



POLYESTER FIBRE TYPE: Synthetic
ORIGIN: Chemically produced, Using petroleum
USED FOR: suits, umbrellas, gym bags
APPEARANCE: usually shiny



Introduction to Lesson Five (Continued)

Show participants pictures of the (non-industrialized) process of making linen or cotton fabric. You can also talk about where wool comes from (sheep, alpaca). Bring different fibers for them to feel.

Planting the seeds

Letting the plants grow

Harvesting the plants

Processing/cleaning the fiber

Spinning it into thread/yarn

Drying it with natural dyes (if you want color)

Weaving

Making a garment or piece of clothing



Introduction to Lesson Five (Continued)



Activity One: Produce Art - Stamps & Prints

Materials:

Paper cards or cardstock, knives, assortment of colored acrylic inks, rollers, cabbage, beets, carrots, potatoes, and okra.

Natural/plant-based paints

Ages // All Ages

Time // 15 - 30 minutes

Activity Description:

There are so many ways to use vegetables – including for art. Have participants cut shapes out of various vegetables, dip them in paint, and make beautiful works of art out of vegetables.

Participants can also mix their own paints using natural & plant materials.

Activity Two: Leaf & Flower Rubbings

Materials:

Paper, crayons, colored pencils, markers, various leaves and flowers, sticks found around the garden area, paints, waxed paper.

Ages // All Ages

Time // 15 minutes

Activity Description:

Go on a scavenger hunt and invite participants to find their favorite leaves and flowers. Dip them in paints and make rubbings by placing them underneath waxed paper or on the bottom of a regular piece of paper. Practices with different techniques and patters. Also use different utensils for marking and rubbings.

Activity Three: Flower Pressing

Materials:

Paper plate (coloured or pre-painted is best)

Contact paper / sticky back plastic

A selection of your pressed flowers

Scrap of paper and black marker pen (optional)

Ages // Ages 4+

Time // 15 minutes

Activity Description:

Press flowers and leaves by using waxed paper inside a book or a flower press. You can also make your own flower press to take home by using two pieces of cardboard that are cut to the same size (the cover), pieces of paper towel or waxed paper, and a string to tie around the cardboard to keep it flat. Participants can collect their own leaves and flowers to put in the press. It takes a few days for everything to dry, so if you would like to do the next project make sure you already have items dried for them for the class time.

To make a pressed flower sun catcher — cut a large hole into your paper plate so that you're left with only a narrow border and plenty of space to stick your pressed flowers.

Then, stick your paper plate border down onto a square of contact paper / sticky back plastic so that you have a sticky surface facing upwards, for children to add the flowers. You want the front of the paper plate to be facing downwards, as you will be working from the back.

Let the kids stick down the pressed flowers onto the sticky surface. The flowers can be quite fragile so they will need to work carefully to make sure they don't rip any of the petals. A little overlap between flowers is fine, and they don't need to be lined up perfectly straight.

If you want to, add a scrap of paper with the date or just the year written on it, as a nice keep sake.

To make a laminated card with pressings — Another path is to lay out the dried flowers and leaves on cardstock, decorate it and write the names of the plants and then laminate it.

Activity Four: Painting Garden Signs & Stakes

Materials:

Flat pieces of scrap wood or boards, wooden stakes, acrylic paints, outdoor sealing paint, brushes, paper plates

Ages // All Ages

Time // 15 minutes

Activity Description:

Beautify the garden by making garden signs — for example make a sign with the garden name, make a sign for the pollinator garden or the compost area, list rules of the garden and organic gardening practices. Community gardens are a great place to learn all types of gardening skills and this is a moment for participants to shine and share the knowledge they've gained. Maybe they would like to make a sign identifying animals or bugs they frequently find in the garden.

These signs can be nailed to posts and dug into the ground or just placed up against fences or buildings to display them.

A good garden always has labeled plants (both plant and variety name) so that anyone walking in can easily identify what is growing there. Be creative with color schemes and designs on wooden garden stakes. Make sure the plant names are easily readable.

Activity Five: Painting Rocks & Tic-Tac-Toe Board

Materials:

Large flat tree stump, paints, brushes, flat rocks

Ages // Ages 4+

Time // 15 minutes

Activity Description:

Rocks are another option for garden markers. Paint rocks with different colors or as bugs (bees and lady bugs) then if there is a large stump available paint it as checkers or a tic-tac-toe board. This is a great way to incorporate games into your garden area.



Activity Six: Farmer's Market Tote Bags or T-Shirts

Materials:

Canvas tote bags or blank t-shirts, fabric paint, fabric stamps and stamp pads, fabric markers, rollers.

Ages // All Ages

Time // 15 minutes

Activity Description:

Use fabric paint, stamps, and fabric markers to decorate tote bags or t-shirts with veggie, fruit, and herb designs.

Activity Seven: Crazy Planters!

Materials:

Strange items that could be planters like old boots, food containers, etc. Soil mix, seedlings or seeds (flowers are fun here!), watering cans.

Ages // All Ages

Time // 15 minutes

Activity Outline:

Bring odd materials that could be used as planters (they need to have some kind of drainage at the bottom or possibility to poke holes in the bottom) and have a contest to see who can design the weirdest planter. Make this a competition between different gardens or between different classes/groups at one particular garden. See who can come up with the best and craziest idea! Get the teachers involved.

Activity Eight: Plant Dyes

Making plant dyes with kids is an excellent way to teach history and science, as well as emphasize that plants can be used for food, for medicine, for making fiber/cloth/clothing, and for energy. Plant dyeing activities are best if done in the art room or outdoors where there is space to spread out and easy surfaces to clean.

Materials: 4 crock pots, Beets, Spinach, Dry onion skins, Black walnuts in shells, Paint brushes, Paper, A dye bath (eg. a large saucepan that no-one minds becoming stained)

Another large saucepan for the fixative process

Rubber gloves (essential unless you wish to dye your hands as well!)

A large spoon for stirring the dye mixtures.

A large sieve

A large bowl (an old clean plastic washing up bowl should be adequate)

Pieces of white pure cotton fabric (eg. old cotton sheets tore into smaller pieces and old or inexpensive white cotton t-shirts). Other natural fabrics such as muslin, silk and wool can also be used. Do not try to dye synthetics or natural fabrics that also contain some synthetic material.

Activity Outline

(sauce pot): Chop plant material into small pieces and place in a pot. Double the amount of water to plant material. Bring to a boil, then simmer for about an hour. Strain. Now you can add your fabric to be dyed. For a stronger shade, allow material to soak in the dye overnight.

Getting the fabric ready for the dye bath: You will have to soak the fabric in a color fixative before the dye process. This will make the color set in the fabric.

Color Fixatives (Mordant):

Salt Fixative (for berry dyes) 1/2 cup salt to 8 cups cold water

Plant Fixatives (for plant dyes) 4 parts cold water to 1 part vinegar

Other Mordant: Cream of tartar, iron, tin, alum or chrome

Add fabric to the fixative and simmer for an hour. Rinse the material and squeeze out excess. Rinse in cool water until water runs clear.

Activity Eight: Plant Dyes (continued)

Dye Bath: Place wet fabric in dye bath. Simmer together until desired color is obtained. The color of the fabric will be lighter when its dry. Also note that all dyed fabric should be laundered in cold water and separately. Muslin, silk, cotton and wool work best for natural dyes and the lighter the fabric in color, the better. White or pastel colors work the best.

For Flowers: boil for 20 minutes. Then strain the liquid through a sieve into your dye bath ready for your fabric. Note: the fabric needs to be soaked in the fixative before dyeing – see below.

For Bark, Roots and other hard substances: First soak these in water overnight. Next day, bring the liquid to the boil and allow to continue for half an hour whilst making sure the liquid doesn't all boil away. Strain the remaining liquid off into a container and then add more water to the bark/roots and boil again.

Repeat this process 3 or 4 times until no more dye can be extracted from the plant material. Having poured the liquid off a number of times you should now have an intense color liquid ready to use for dyeing your cloth.

Yellow dye can be made from: marigolds dandelion yarrow sunflowers

Orange dyes from plants can be made from: carrot roots onion skin butternut seed husks, turmeric

For natural plant dyes in shades of brown, look for: hollyhock petals, walnut husks fennel

Pink dye can be derived from: camellias, roses, lavender

Purple colors can come from: blueberries, grapes, coneflowers, hibiscus

Green comes from: Lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*) Leaves, Nettle (*Urtica dioica* and *U. Urens*)

Red comes from: Red leaves will give a reddish brown color, salt to set the dye.

Activity Nine: Flower Crowns & Bouquets

Materials: Ribbon, thread, lots of flowers

Ages // All Ages

Time // 15 minutes

Activity Description:

There are various ways to make flower crowns, but the easiest way is to cut flowers with pretty long stems, line the stems up one by one and then wrap thread around the flowers until it is long enough that it will bend in a circle and fit the participants head. If you want to take it another step you could weave the ribbon in and out or braid the flowers together.

Activity Ten: Yarn Babies

Materials: Cotton or Wool Yarn

Ages // All Ages

Time // 20 minutes

Activity Description:

Wrap yarn around your hand a few times. This will become the arms. Set aside. Wrap yarn around a piece of cardboard about 6-12 inches long. This will become the body. Tie a string around this piece to make the head, the middle. Cut one end of the loop (to make the skirt). Insert the yarn you wrapped around your hand through to body portion. Tie the ends with two small strings and then cut them. Elaborate on the design by adding clothes, hair (braided), etc.



Activity Eleven: Nature Baskets

Materials: Sticks, yarn, plants

Ages // All Ages

Time // 20 minutes

Activity Description:



Other Activity Ideas

- Learning how to tie various knots with natural plant fibers
- Making cordage/rope from plants
- Weaving
- Finger knitting

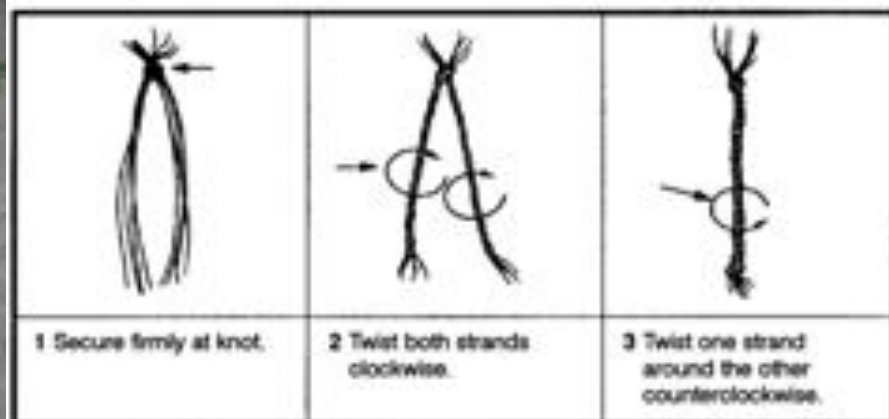


Figure 12-8. Making lines from plant fibers.

