



GARDENING CLUB

Participants gather together to care for a communal space.



Nothing in Nature is superfluous, and the same is true in Gardening Club. This is a place where everyone has the ability to contribute something meaningful. One person can twist the knob of the faucet while another can hold the nozzle of the hose. The person capable of picking up a stick can dispose it in a wheelbarrow, which someone else's wheelchair can tug away. There is a natural incentive to include everyone because the work of caring for living things is year-round and non-stop. The seasons come with their own curriculum of things to do -- planting in spring, weeding in summer, harvesting in fall, garden planning in winter -- as well as opportunities to celebrate at turning points like plantings, harvests, and solstices. And yet, the garden can also be a reprieve from work. Whether by looking at the way ice laminates the trees in winter or feeling the waxiness of grass in the spring, growing things captivate all five senses throughout all four seasons and restore both mind and body.

TCFD OUTCOMES

This activity is aimed at helping individuals excel in the following categories:

- Motor Skills
- Community
- Emotional Regulation
- Life Skills

DEVELOPING A GARDENING CLUB

- 1** Choose what type of garden suits your location and the skills of your group members.
- 2** Plant your garden and encourage group members to care for it daily.
- 3** Harvest the crop to be enjoyed by all and reap the benefits of the group's hard work.

MATERIALS CHECKLIST

Gardening Tools

- Garden Gloves
- Shovels
- Rakes
- Hoes/Water Can
- Seeds/ Starter Plants
- Fencing
- Pots
- Pruning Sheers
- Wheelbarrow
- Rottotiller

SAFETY

Always consider all areas of safety before starting a Gardening Club.



Review each participant's behavior plan to proactively support their work in the garden.



Plan for the weather. Educate participants on how to dress appropriately in the garden, use sunscreen, and stay hydrated.



Beware of harmful plants and animals such as ticks, mosquitoes, and poison ivy.



THINGS TO CONSIDER

Choosing A Location: Begin by taking inventory of what you have. In terms of space, this means that as long as your garden can get sunlight and water, the size of the garden can range from a box on a windowsill, to a pot on a patio or a plot outside. Don't be discouraged if you have to start small at first – even a single plant can provide an entire sensory experience.

Choosing What To Plant: Whether you choose to plant flowers, herbs, or vegetables, consider organizing your garden around a theme. Decide as a group whether you might select plants that offer food and shelter to butterflies throughout their lifecycle, or plant all the ingredients required to make a specific dish like pizza or salsa.

Show participants examples of what harvested plants or flowers will look like and vote on what the group should plant.

Taking It All In: Even though the garden demands daily chores, it also has a lot to give back to you. Take time for group members to enjoy the garden as place of ease and beauty rather than a place of constant work.

Think of the garden as a sensory experience by encouraging participants to look, listen, smell, touch, and taste while in the garden.



GARDENING CLUB ACTIVITIES



Preparing the Soil: When starting a garden plot, prepare the soil by digging up any grass or weeds with a tool like a rototiller.

Composting is a way to keep your garden organically fertilized. Research different composting methods to decide which option would be best for your club and educate participants on what items can be composted, how to compost, and how to care for your compost pile.

Participants can help clear the area by removing old grass, roots, and debris. Use this as a chance to practice pushing a wagon or wheelbarrow, or attach the wheelbarrow to a participant's manual or power wheelchair.

If you're planting in pots or raised garden beds, participants can pour bags of soil into the pots and help spread it evenly.



Planting: Research the types of crops you are planting to determine how much space each one needs. Choose high quality seeds or started plants from your local nursery or online. Once they arrive, participants can dig an appropriately sized hole and place the seed in before covering it with soil.

Show participants examples of what harvested plants or flowers will look like and vote on what the group should plant.

A If participants are not able to reach the holes in the ground, a guide like a rain gutter or piece of PVC pipe may be used to funnel the seeds.



Watering and Weeding: Weed your garden regularly so the plants do not have to compete for water and sunlight. Make sure your garden has enough water each day, whether by relying on rain or doing the watering yourself.

A Some participants may use a switch activated waterer.

Consider making a garden care schedule to assign watering and weeding times to group members.



Harvesting: Harvesting the vegetables, herbs, or flowers is the most rewarding aspect of a garden club. Encourage participants to make choices and decide when the crop is ready to be picked. With many vegetables and flowers, the more you pick, the more are likely to grow in and replace them. When the planting season comes to an end, the garden club can collect and package seeds to renew the garden's life cycle for the next year.

Consider using your bountiful harvest as a way to connect with your local community. You can arrange and deliver vegetables and bouquets to local food pantries, nursing homes, shelters, etc. These visible, tangible contributions to the community enhance participants' sense of self-worth and belonging.



EXTRA CLUB ACTIVITIES

Garden Markers

Stoke the group's creativity by making garden markers to identify each plant when they are in the beginning stages of growth.

Flower Arrangements

Encourage the group to choose which flowers they would like to pick and arrange the flowers into bouquets.

Pressed Flowers

Pressing flowers during the harvest months provides opportunities for the Gardening Club members and others to enjoy flowers all year long, in the form of stationery, framed wall art, or note pads.

Wreaths, Swags, and Centerpieces

Group members can collect cuttings from the local trees and shrubs they find on a nature walk and transform them into seasonal decorations. For example, a pumpkin can be repurposed as a pot and stuffed with Spanish moss, dried flowers, and mums to make a centerpiece for Thanksgiving.