

# The Beginner's Guide to Garden Art

## Why garden art?

You might be asking, "Why would we learn about art in the garden? I only use it to teach my students about science!"

Follow this inspirational path to start making art in the garden and from the garden!

On the other hand, you might wonder, "How can my art students work in a garden? Sure, we can draw some flowers and plants, but then what?"

**Bringing art and the garden together allows students to:**

-  Hone observational skills
-  Use multiple senses at once
-  Cultivate a sense of beauty and cooperation
-  See everyday things like grass and flowers in new ways
-  Create pleasant, beautiful outdoor spaces
-  Understand how to apply the same learning and cognitive skills to many different disciplines
-  Develop greater respect for natural resources
-  Learn about historical connections between art and nature
-  Feel a sense of ownership over the garden
-  Participate in interdisciplinary activities with increased relevance for everyday life

**I'm ready to start making garden art! Now what should I do?**

Use the projects on the back of this page for inspiration, and look for more ideas and detailed instructions on the web.

Don't worry about expensive materials! All of the projects included in this guide call for recycled materials or things you can find in the garden.

**What am I getting myself into?**  
The following key indicates the time commitment and level of difficulty for each project.

-  Quick and easy...Perfect for little sprouts!
-   Set aside an afternoon to try this with mature seedlings.
-    Prepare for a few days of hard work with seasoned green thumbs!

## Use Materials from the Garden

 **Sell Your Own Seeds:** Collect seeds from mature vegetables and dried flowers, and create your seed packaging with clever text and fun illustrations. Check out <http://centerschool.net/seedstore.html> for examples of inspiring garden puns.

 **Leaf Rubbings:** Gather leaves from plants in the garden, and record their texture with crayons or pencils to preserve fleeting bits of nature throughout the winter.

 **Sun Prints:** Use sun-sensitive or blueprint paper to create beautiful records of treasures found in your garden.

 **Beautiful Beans:** Harvested more beans than you want to eat? Use dried beans of different colors to create a beautiful mosaic. Glue the beans to a hard backing or press them into clay or dough.

  **For the Birds:** Build on the early Native American tradition of drying, drilling, and hanging large gourds as houses for nesting birds. Polish the avian shelters or decorate them with acrylic paint.

   **Fabrics to Dye For:** Experiment with the plants in your garden, or create a special dye garden. Try dyeing or tie-dyeing yarn, clothing, and other fabrics. For a great primer on dyeing, visit <http://www.garden.org/articles/articles.php?q=show&id=943&page=1>.

   **Garden Journals:** Use fibrous plants to craft handmade paper and dyes from the garden to color the paper. Then, bind your creation into a journal to record changes in your gardens, drawings of the plants, poems, reflections and more! See <http://www.kidsgardening.com/growingideas/projects/nov02/pg1.html#live> for detailed paper-making instructions.

## Use Recyclable Materials

 **Fork, Knife and Spoon Chimes:** Hang decorated plastic cutlery from a paper plate or metal cutlery from a strong wooden base to create cheap, funky wind chimes for the garden.

 **Mini-Vases:** Cover plastic bottles or stacked cups in gluey tissue paper to make unique vases for flowers from your garden.

  **Blooming Necklace:** Nestle a few seeds among dampened cotton balls inside of an old film container. Use a screw eye hook and some yarn to make this mini-garden into a necklace so you can watch your plants' progress all day long!

  **Stepping Stones:** Pour quick-drying concrete or Hypertufa (artificial stone) into a stepping stone mold. Decorate your stones with broken plates and pottery shards, old beads or marbles, leaves, rocks, and anything else you can find!

   **Garbage Garden:** Use old tires, bicycles, appliances, heaps of metal, springs and coils, and chicken wire to create sculptures that express the personality of your garden and its caretakers. For inspiration, take a look at the Sculpture Garden at San Francisco Recycling and Disposal: <http://www.sfrecycling.com/AIR/sculpturegarden.php?t=d>.

**For more garden art inspiration and ideas, visit  
Cornell University's Garden-Based Learning Program website at  
<http://www.hort.cornell.edu/gbl>.**

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