

Plot Your Garden

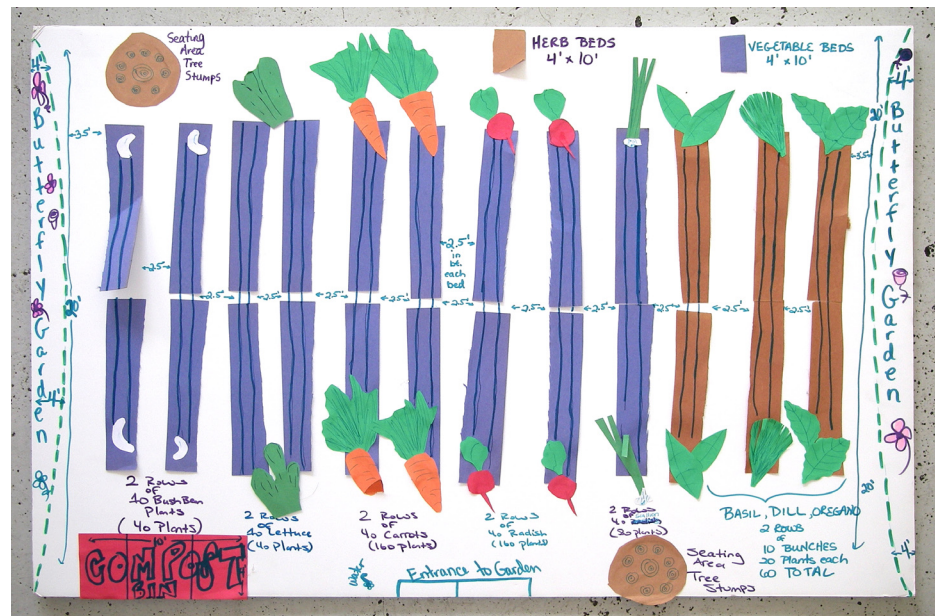
How does your garden grow? With careful, creative planning that includes input from every young gardener! Engage your students in the garden planning process — before the season begins — by inviting them to map out what they would like to grow. By measuring the garden space and calculating square footage, students will put their math skills into practice while generating excitement and a sense of ownership in the gardening project.



Dig Deeper

Many different elements go into a successful garden. When planning what to grow, always consider your site conditions: What plants will do well there? How can you make the most of the space? How much care will the class be able to devote? Also consider your school calendar: When can you begin planting? When will you be able to harvest?

Many resources are available to help with the planning process. Most seed suppliers including Burpee (burpee.com) and Johnny's Selected Seeds (johnnyseeds.com) offer free catalogs on request. Besides being a rich source of images for maps and garden art projects, seed catalogs offer a wealth of information on cultivation and growing conditions.



Online tools are also available. The Vegetable Planner (vegetableplanner.vegetable-gardening-online.com) allows you to select the dimensions of your garden, input different vegetables with appropriate spacing,

and save or print your plan for future use. Burpee's Growing Calendar (burpee.com/gygg) lets you know when to plant different types of seeds based on your geographic location.

What You'll Need



- Observation logs
- Colored pencils
- Graph paper
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Rulers
- Tape measure
- Seed catalogs



What To Do

TALK ABOUT GARDEN PLANNING

Ask students why planning is important for a garden project. What elements are needed for a successful garden? What problems might you encounter if you don't plan ahead? Start the planning process by brainstorming some goals for the garden (food production, school beautification, learning, etc.) Ask the students to jot down a list of plants they may want to grow. Pass out seed catalogs for inspiration.

MAKE CALCULATIONS

Take measurements of your garden space, and have the students calculate the perimeter and area. Ask students to write down other

observations on site conditions. Is it shady or sunny? What is the soil like? Using seed catalogs or other resources as a guide, have each student make a chart of seven plants and how much space they will need, based on their size at maturity. How many will fit in a row? Are there some plants that will not fit in your garden space?

MAKE GARDEN MAPS

Decide on the scale you will use for your garden maps. Pass out graph paper, construction paper, rulers, scissors, and colored pencils. Ask each student to create a detailed map of the garden, including the different herbs and vegetables they would like to plant. Use construction paper

shapes to represent each plant type, or use cut-out photographs from seed catalogs. As the students map out their plots, remind them that they will want to consider aesthetics such as plant height and color, as well as logistics. Be sure to measure carefully to maintain accurate scale.

SHARE GARDEN MAPS

Invite the students to present their garden maps and share their ideas with the rest of the class. Why did they choose some vegetables over others? How did they decide on their layout? What criteria did they use? Discuss ways to integrate all the students' ideas into a master garden plan that everyone will be able to use and enjoy.

Plant to Person



Careful planning is an essential element of gardening. Ask your students to remember a time when planning was important in a context outside the garden.

Have they ever planned something—a school assignment, an event with friends—that turned out well due to careful preparation? Have they participated in other projects that didn't turn out so well because they weren't able to plan ahead?

Sometimes unplanned words or actions can have unintended effects on others. Ask the students how they can plan their actions to have beneficial consequences, rather than harmful ones.

Take Action

Challenge your students to find the nearest community garden to their home. Who runs the garden? What types of plants are growing there? How is the garden organized?

Invite the students to visit the garden, talk to the gardeners if possible, and take notes on what they learn. Share their findings with the class.

How might this information help them to plan and map their own garden?

