Using our Senses in the Kitchen and Garden

Curriculum Links

Health and Physical Education
- Combine fundamental movement skills to creatively sequence and perform more complicated movement patterns (draft document)

Science
- Explore and make observations about the world, using our senses (Fdn., ACSIS011).

The Arts
- Imagine and create new movement through improvisation (draft document)
- Imagine and create their own music by investigating combinations of sound and silence (draft document)
- Explore how to express ways of seeing or imagining their world through working with images, forms, objects and spaces (draft document)

Cross-curriculum priorities
- Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia

About this unit

All our senses are engaged in kitchen and garden classes as we savour smells, learn about flavour, enjoy the beauty of the garden, listen to animal life and the pop, sizzle and boil of cooking, and explore the colours and textures of plants.

This unit includes sensory learning activity ideas that can be useful with younger students, special needs and ‘buddy’ groups of older and younger year levels working together.

Many of the activities have extensions or variations that link the activity to a learning area such as literacy, numeracy or the arts. Try them with split classes or as a hands-on starter to a class.

Sensory gardens and the Kitchen Garden Program

Many schools have added sensory design elements to their garden. Students who need time to stimulate or calm their senses seem to respond particularly well to these spaces.

We have plenty of resources to help you design a fantastic sensory garden or sensory design elements for your school. Please log onto the Shared Table Resource Library (www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au) and search for ‘sensory garden’. You will find downloadable design tips, accessibility checklists, plant lists and design ideas. See how a country and a special needs city school designed their gardens and gradually developed them to engage all students’ senses in creative and amazing ways.
Using our Senses in the Kitchen and Garden—Activity Cards

From motor skills to sound spectacles, these activities are flexible sensory explorations of the garden and kitchen. Extensions are optional but may help integrate these activities with other learning.

**Garden Grooves**

Learn to play the spoons. Or make a percussion set from old, pre-loved kitchen gear. What’s the difference between metal, wood and plastic?

**Extension/Variation:** Explore world rhythms such as samba, flamenco, djembe, clapsticks and other Indigenous rhythms from around Australia and the world.

(movement, sound – the Arts)

**Wheelbarrow Relay**

In teams as a relay, students pilot a wheelbarrow safely on a course through the garden. Points for safety, not for speed!

**Extension/Variation:** This popular activity is ideal for a new garden class, and doing it again a few months later will show how students’ motor skills improve. Make it more challenging by placing an awkward tool in the barrow, including a slope, or requiring a few steps in reverse. There is a ‘Wheelbarrow Licence’ template in the Kitchen Garden Program Syllabus, which can be used to confirm students have mastered this skill.

(movement – Health and Physical Education)

**Lizard Lounges**

Students imitate an animal they have studied. They copy how it moves and make a sentence that links the movement to facts they know about the animal. For example, ‘Lizard lounges … on the rocks.’ or ‘Potoroo hops … through the bush looking for fungi.’

**Extension/Variation:** Prompt for new investigation questions as you go. For example, do you think the lizard spends all night on the rocks? Why not? Where does it sleep?

(movement – Science)
What Can it Be?
Put a small garden tool or kitchen tool, such as a trowel or a pair of tongs, into a paper bag. Tape the bag shut. Students feel the bag and guess what the item is. This activity works when students have some familiarity with common kitchen and garden items and can see how much they have learned.

**Extension/Variation:** This could be a short game at the beginning of a Design and Technologies unit in which students explore the design of a common implement or tool.

(texture – Design and Technologies)

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**Sensory Seeds**
Pass around a fabric bag with large seeds inside. Include seed pods, dried beans and interesting seed shapes such as winged tree seeds. Some indigenous species of trees and shrubs in Australia have large knobbly seeds, while dried broad bean seeds can be smooth and slick. Students describe what they feel.

**Extension/Variation:** Create a gallery of seeds (finding out what each one is), or use this activity to introduce a science inquiry into plant life cycles.

(texture – Science, Literacy)

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**Texture Treasure Hunt**
Students look for textures in the garden. Prepare a card with samples of textural fabrics and items and either hide the same items in the garden or ask students to find something they think is similar. Describe textures or make rubbings.

(texture, smell – Literacy)

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**Kitchen and Garden Adjectives**
Describe textures we have experienced in our kitchen classes, such as smooth, springy pizza dough, silky bread dough, grainy dry lentils, the slipperiness of a hard-boiled egg. Describe sensory garden experiences such as the oily smell of the tool shed or the furry leaf of a globe artichoke.

(texture, smell – Literacy)
Feather Race Relay

Find a feather (small ones are best). Gather students in teams. Each team takes turns to huff and puff and blow their feather across a table to fall off the other end. You can stipulate that the feather has to fall off the end, rather than the sides, to encourage students to learn to control their breath and direction of force. (Do this inside or on a calm day or it may turn into feather flyaway!)

**Extension/Variation:** Talk about physics and forces, or explore how much air our lungs can hold by blowing up balloons.

(movement – Science, Health and Physical Education)

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Blindfold Garden Tour

Each student explores the garden individually, using their nose to pinpoint a scent. Then in partners, one child closes their eyes and the other leads them carefully to their scent. Discuss how we communicate and help our partners and what it feels like to have to trust your partner not to let you stumble.

(smell, sight – Health and Physical Education)

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Shadow Puppets

Hang a white sheet in the garden and check the angle of the sun so that a strong shadow falls on it. Make and display shadow puppet plays.

**Extension/Variation:** This can link to studies of Indonesian shadow puppet traditions as well as practical experience of how the sun’s shadow moves and changes from week to week over the seasons (i.e. we come back to the same spot to practise next week and the angle of the sun has changed slightly. Seasonal change becomes evident.)

(sight – Science)

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Sand Maps

Fill plastic trays with dry or damp sand. Using their fingertips, students draw a map of the garden. They could make a ‘smell map’, mapping the scent areas from the Blindfold Garden Tour. Flowers, bark, seeds and other natural debris can be added as symbols to identify areas of the garden.

(texture, sight – Health and Physical Education)
Silent Garden
Have students find a spot on their own in the garden to sit in silence for 30 seconds. Ask them to listen carefully. What is one thing that is not related to humans that they hear? (Birds, rustling leaves ...)

(sound)

Outdoor Scents
During or after a garden class, students choose a word or two to describe the smell of locations in the garden such as the compost, particular scented plants, freshly turned earth and so on.

(smell)

Taste and Smell
Try the Taste Tests again but this time each student holds their nose shut for the tasting moment. Do they find it more difficult to distinguish between tastes? Why?

Extension/Variation: Use this as a hands-on introduction to explore the links between the taste and smell senses.

(taste, smell – Science)

Colour Cards
Prepare cards with a rainbow of paint chips or coloured squares. Students take a card and match each colour to something in the garden of a similar colour.

Extension/Variation: You could also make a set of shapes (based on leaf shapes, petals, etc.)

(sight – Mathematics)

Memory Match
Take photos or draw outlines of items in the garden. Make two of each and put them on cards. Play memory games.

(sight)

Taste Tests
Collect several varieties of the same food: different tomatoes, apples, carrots, types of lettuce – even different kinds of honey. Taste tiny samples and describe the difference. Remind students to describe texture as well as taste – it’s an important part of our reactions to food.

(taste, texture)
Clucky Nests
Use sticks and twigs to create a nest in the garden. It can be big enough for one student to sit in the middle or small enough for a pottery bird or a special egg-shaped stone. Big nests will soon be destroyed; little nests can be hidden in unexpected places and may survive a week or two in the garden. Let them decay and watch the garden change. Discuss.
(movement, texture – Science)

Garden Pictures
In pairs, one student covers their eyes while the other leads them gently to something special in the garden. Have them use their hands to make a frame or viewer. Share the special things you found, and talk about how you considered the needs of the student with their eyes shut.
(sight)

Before and After
Students describe the texture, taste and smell of ingredients before they go into a dish, and after. Oatmeal, rice, apple, couscous, carrots, pasta dough and spinach are all good examples.
(taste, texture, smell)

School Example – Sensory Poems
Students create simple sensory poems about their experiences:

Today in the garden I:

Touched

Smelled

Listened to

Watched

Felt

Tasted

Heard

 Noticed

Similarly you could use a sensory response after a kitchen experience.
(Courtesy of Caroline Lawson, Benarkin State School, Queensland)