Outdoor Classroom Theme Garden Ideas

A theme garden is designed around a specific idea. They are a great way to showcase a topic, a famous person, a book, an area of interest or just an idea that you want to bring to life through plants.

**Sensory Garden**

*Plant a garden that stimulates children’s different senses.*

**Smell Suggestions:**
- Scented geraniums, *pelargoniums*
- Lavender, *Lavandula angustifolia*
- Curry plant, *Helichrysum italicum*
- Chocolate cosmos, *Cosmos atrosanguineus*
- Pineapple sage
- Thyme
- Lemon balm
- Lemon basil
- Cinnamon basil
- Orange mint
- Rosemary

**Touch Suggestions:**
- Lamb's ear, *Stachys byzantina*
- Maidenhair Fern, *Adiantum pedantum*
- Sensitive plant, *Mimosa pudica* - the leaves immediately close up when touched

**Sound Suggestions:**
- Wind chimes
- Wind rustling the plants
- Leaves crackling
- Water feature
- Bees buzzing
- Birds singing

**Sight Suggestions:**
- Different colored plants and flowers or plants with different shaped leaves.

**Taste Suggestions:**
- Spearmint, *Mentha spicata*
- Rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis*
- Wild strawberry, *Fragaria vesca*

**Color Wheel for Birds**

*Include a variety of plants that provide seeds for birds and have different colored flowers. Note: Be sure to leave the “dead heads” on the flower tops so the birds can eat the seeds.*

**Colorful Flowers & Tasty Seed Suggestions:**
- Black eyed susans – flowers are brown and black
- Purple coneflower – flowers are typically purple but some cultivars are different colors like pink
- Dwarf sunflowers – flowers can be a variety of colors but are typically yellow or orange
- Gerber daisies – flowers are a wide variety of colors

**Storybook Gardens**

*Select plants that relate to children's literature.*

**Beatrix Potter’s Peter Cottontail Suggestions:**
- Beets
- Radishes
- Herbs such as mint, lavender, sage, chamomile, and rosemary

**Dr. Seuss’ Daisy Head Mazie Suggestions:**
- Daisies
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**Healthy Veggie Garden**
*Plant vegetables that help children stay healthy.*

**Healthy Veggie Suggestions:**
- Asparagus
- Cauliflower
- Spinach
- Brussels Sprouts
- Lima Beans
- Sweet Potato
- Carrots
- Peas
- Tomatoes

**Pioneer Garden**
*Plant heirloom plants that were first introduced from European settlers.*

**Plant Suggestions:**
- Scarlet Runner Bean
- Cosmos
- Love-Lies-Bleeding
- Giant Flowering Tobacco
- Pumpkin

**African Garden**
*Plants that were originally grown in Africa before being brought to North America.*

**Plant Suggestions:**
- Cucumber
- Black-eyed Peas
- Collards
- Okra
- Watermelon
- Sesame
- Peanuts
- Geraniums
- Sorghum

**North American Indian Garden**
*Plants that were grown in the Americas by the native Indians before Columbus’s discovery of the “New World” in 1492.*

**Suggestions:**
- Beans
- Gourds
- Squash
- Corn
- Pumpkins
- Sweet Grass (for baskets)

**Patriotic Garden**
*Celebrate the United States and the Fourth of July in your garden.*
Let red, white, and blue flowers abound. Include a sweet alyssum border, geraniums, lobelia, cosmos, begonias, and impatiens. For the finishing touch, add American flags to the mix.

**Cottage Garden**
*Feature "old fashioned" plants, such as those mentioned in Mother Goose poems (Silver Bells and Cockle Shells).*
- Daisy 'Miss Muffet'
- Speedwell 'Sunny Border Blue'
- Coralbells 'Palace Purple'
- Silver Lace Vine
- Delphinium