

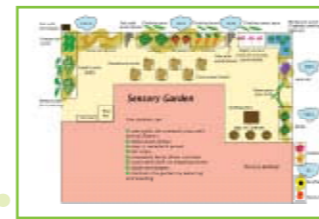


Sue Cowley
is an educational author
and keen gardener.

online extra!

Subscribers can visit our website to download a plan of the 'Sensory garden'

www.scholastic.co.uk/nurseryedplus



See how our garden has grown

In the final part of this mini series, Sue Cowley, Chairperson of Stanton Drew and Pensford Pre-school in Somerset, unveils their finished garden

Over the last couple of months, we have planned and constructed our garden area. With the build complete, we have been adding plants and using the garden to support our children's learning. We have also organised a big celebration to thank everyone who got involved with our project.

Planning the pond

We were keen to have a pond in our garden area, so we needed to think carefully about safety issues. Our garden will not only be used by pre-school children, it will also be accessible to the general public. After some online research, we decided to use a 'DiamonDeck' grid (www.pondsafety.com) to cover the open water. We have put hinges on the grid so that it can be raised when the children want to look at the pond, and padlocked down when not in use. Then it was a case of setting the tadpoles free.

Planning the planting

With the raised beds built, parents started to bring us donations of plants and seeds. The children were eager to get planting, so we drew up a plan to show where things should go. We decided on a 'sensory' theme for the planting and layout, with herbs to smell, crops to taste, leaves to

stroke, wind chimes to hear and lots of colourful flowers to look at.

Bringing the EYFS into our garden

We are finding lots of ways to use our garden to help us deliver the EYFS. There have been some adult-initiated/directed tasks, such as studying snails and making a bug box. But we have also been watching to see what direction the children's interests take, and how we can follow through on this. For example, the children have been:

- studying the behaviour of snails and woodlice (*Knowledge and Understanding of the World: show curiosity and interest in the features of living things*)
- matching minibeasts to pictures of wildlife in a book (*Communication, Language and Literacy: know that information can be retrieved from books*)
- making a bug box where the minibeasts can live, and also wind chimes for our 'sound' area (*Knowledge and Understanding of the World: construct with a purpose in mind, using a variety of resources*)
- planting peas, lettuce, alpine strawberries and sweetcorn using trowels (*Physical Development: use one-handed tools and equipment*)
- using the stepping-stones for counting games (*Problem Solving,*



Our 'smell/scent' bed



Josh and Joe study snails with Lynne



Our bug box



Handmade wind chimes



Our healthy crops of peas, lettuce, sweetcorn and strawberries



The children 'open' the garden

Reasoning and Numeracy: use some number names accurately in play

- planting, growing and harvesting crops, and talking about why the fruits and vegetables we grow are good for us (*Physical Development: recognise the importance of keeping healthy, and those things which contribute to this*).

Over time, the children will see the changes that take place in their garden, and we will be able to help them learn about how the seasons affect the way plants grow.

Grand opening

To mark our achievements, and to say a proper 'thank you' to everyone who has helped with the garden makeover, we decided to hold a grand opening. We sent out invitations to the companies who had made donations, and prepared Buck's Fizz and cream teas.

On the day of the grand opening, we had plant and cake stalls, refreshments and a raffle to raise funds for the pre-school. The ribbon was cut by the children and the garden was officially open. The children were given envelopes of annual seeds, which they scattered in one of the flower-beds, and which are already growing fast.



The team look on with pride, despite the weather



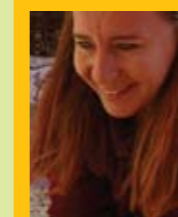
Thom decides where to scatter his seeds

Our thoughts on the build...



Steve, the garden designer:

'It is a shame to see wasted spaces when a garden can be created with just a little time and effort. That's why it was such a pleasure to play a part in this project. It is satisfying to change a space so that people can use and enjoy it, and it was brilliant to share in everyone's enthusiasm. I'm looking forward to young gardeners learning about how things grow. We really did make something out of nothing. And, in the future, hopefully, we will get the chance to dig up the car park and turn it into a garden!'



Lynne, pre-school practitioner:

'I was so pleased when the Hall Committee agreed to us using the area to make into a garden. It has been wonderful to feel the sense of community brought about by this project. Building our garden has also proved to be a great way of getting parents involved with the setting, and it has been particularly pleasing to see so many dads helping out. Now it is finished, the area has been transformed beyond anything I imagined possible. And what is really great is that it will benefit the local children for years to come. We cannot wait for our first crop of vegetables, which the children can pick, wash and eat for their snack. What better way to learn about fresh, healthy eating?'

With thanks to:

- All the parents, carers, staff, volunteers and children who helped create our garden
- Steve Collins (email gardensbystevecollins@hotmail.com)
- Mark Vears and Vears Ltd (www.vearsltd.co.uk)
- Vears Decorating Ltd (www.vears.co.uk)
- R O Dando & Sons (email corinne@dando.org.uk)
- Whitehall Garden Centre (www.whitehallgardencentre.co.uk)
- The Stanton Drew Parish Hall Committee
- Manda Le Pivert and Jim Bishop (photography).



The safety cover for our pond