

The Garden in Winter: Time to Begin

With this Winter garden activity, you will gently and with ease begin the process of creating a garden. Specifically, you will **select, map, design, prepare for, and ever-so-slightly begin** to establish (or continue) a garden. **This can be any type of garden, in any location and of just about any size.** For example, it could be a food garden, a medicine garden, a butterfly garden, a native plant woodland, an "art" garden, or even a container garden on your back patio. Or it could be a combination of these or something different altogether. You may also work with an already established garden. In this case, you will map what exists and begin to design what you would like to add.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU ENJOY THIS ACTIVITY. DO NOT ALLOW IT TO BECOME STRESSFUL. IN FACT, GIVING YOURSELF THE SPACE AND TIME TO DREAM, VISION, AND PREPARE DURING WINTER IS, IN LARGE MEASURE, THE REASON FOR WHAT WE ARE DOING.

STEPS.

Step 1: Select your site & get acquainted. (Week 5 & 6)

- 1) Sit quietly doing nothing. Look. Listen. Smell. Touch. Observe.
- 2) **Make a map** of plants and various features. Include a key with plant identification (when known) and descriptions (when not known).
- 3) **Take photographs.**
- 4) **Complete a Site Description.** (See format).
- 5) **Make two drawings.** Yes, two actual drawings. They can be of individual plants or the overall site. Don't worry. The point is to get to know your spot more intimately, not to make masterpieces. Relax and enjoy.
- 6) Scan and post these assignments under the Garden button on your Web Page.

Step 2: Vision. (Week 6 & 7)

- 1) Begin to brainstorm what you would like to plant. Your vision may include actual plant species or it may take the form of a feeling or quality you hope to achieve. It might even be a palette of colors you wish the plants to paint. At this point, don't worry about what can be planted now and what must be planted later. Visualize freely and to your heart's content.
- 2) **Write, list, draw, paint, or cut out pictures to make a mosaic that conveys your vision.**
- 3) Continue to sit with and observe your garden. View it as your friend. Ask what it wants to be.
- 4) Scan and post these assignments under the Garden button on your Web Page.

Step 3: Design & Plan. (Week 7, 8 & 9)

There are several aspects of a plan. The best order for considering these aspects will vary for each person and each garden idea. Your plan will need to include the following:

- 1) **Specific plant species** (include Latin name, English common name, Family, Brief Description – habit, size, color, growth rate, brief use information, reason for selection, procurement possibilities, other). Don't expect this to be complete. You can add to it during the spring.
- 2) **A design with intended location for species** (considering plant groupings)
- 3) **Sequence of activities based on the season – what to do according each month**
- 4) **Materials and tools that are needed**

5) Compost system

6) Watering system

- 7) **Other, such as:** Techniques (and possibly an underlying philosophical orientation such as permaculture, biodynamics, gardening by the moon, etc.)
- 8) You might wish to get feedback on your plan from friends and/or a local nursery.
- 9) Scan and post these assignments under the Garden button on your Web Page.

Step 4: Implementation. (Week 8 & 9)

- 1) It's time to think about something small that you can do NOW. So you will first turn your plan into a sequence of steps, then you will select something to tangibly do.
- 2) Now, you will implement two or three of your selected steps. Remember that the focus of this activity was not action. It is dreaming, visioning, **readying** yourself for action. But taking a few steps will be empowering and energizing.
- 3) Remember to still sit quietly with your site in between your activities.
- 4) Also, document the activities and changes with photographs.
- 5) Scan and post these assignments under the Garden button on your Web Page.

Step 5: Share (Due: Saturday, Week 10)

Print and bring hard copy of your work to share with a small group of students.

Garden Site Description

I. Ownership, Location & Directions to Site.

II. Describing the Area (This consists of a qualitative description of your observations.)
First, an overall description of the general area:

III. Describing the Garden Site:

1. Size

2. Shape (use descriptive words such as oval, long & narrow, etc.):

3. Topography (use appropriate adjectives such as flat, uneven, undulating, etc.):

4. Slope(s) (estimate the percentage away from level) and Orientation (NSEW):

5. Exposure (estimate how many hours per day you think the area gets sun):

6. Soil characteristics:

Texture (sandy, clay, loam, etc.)

Color

Consistency (firm, loose)

Drainage (well, poor)

7. Water Features (if any: type, width, length, depth, velocity):

8. Principal Plant Species present:

(Include estimated **abundance** (little, moderate, a great deal) and **stage of of growth or approximate size** (small, young, seedling, 4 feet tall) and **quality**(healthy, robust, sickly, etc.)

9. Evidence of animal activity (nests, tracks, burrow, insects, foraging, etc.):

10. The "story" (history, etc.) of the site, if known:

11. Your feelings about the site. Include why you have chosen this place for your garden.

Be sure to include the date.