



Junior Gardener

Creating a bright bouquet of fresh flowers, making a dish with garden-fresh herbs, growing a little green cheer inside with houseplants—these are all things a gardener gets to do. In this badge, dig your hands into the earth and spend time with soil, water, and sunlight to find out how to help life grow from a tiny seed. You can make your own garden— no matter where you live!

Steps

1. Visit a garden
2. Explore garden design
3. Learn how to choose garden plants
4. Experiment with seeds
5. Grow your own garden

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know how to help plants and flowers grow.

Step 1 Visit a garden

The best way to get inspired about gardening is to explore and enjoy a well-cared-for garden. Take a tour of one of the gardens below to start learning about how gardens are planted, how to take care of them, and the right way to pick flowers when they've blossomed.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Visit an outdoor garden. Check out a garden at a neighbor's house, in a public space in your community, or at a farm. Take photos or make sketches or drawings of your favorite plants in case you decide to grow them yourself. Ask how they grow!

OR

Visit an indoor garden. See what it takes to grow plants inside a greenhouse or hothouse. These can usually be found at a botanical garden or nursery. Ask why gardeners keep the temperature set differently in different areas.

OR

Visit a landscaped garden. Find a landscaped garden with pruned shrubs and lines of plants and other flowers. Many cities and large houses have specially landscaped gardens.

For More FUN: A shrub cut into a shape is called a topiary. If you made a topiary, what shape would it be? Share your ideas with friends.

Step 2 Explore garden design

The first gardens on record were planted in Persia 4,000 years ago. Humans have long known that well-designed gardens can have magical effects— they can make people feel cheerful, thoughtful, or inspired. What kind do you want?

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Plan your dream garden. Cut out pictures of flowers, trees, and other plants from magazines. Then arrange a garden plan that appeals to you. Use the photos to experiment with various layouts. What kinds of colors, patterns, and shapes are your favorites?

OR

Look into surprising gardens. Gather information about three surprising gardens—try to find out who designed them and how they did it. What about rooftop gardens, English landscape gardens, palace gardens, midnight gardens, or gardens meant to attract certain insects or animals? Then imagine a special garden of your own. Share your idea in a sketch.

OR

Make a mini Zen garden. Zen gardens are from Japan, and use rocks, gravel, and other structures to represent natural things like ocean waves or swaying trees. Zen gardeners rake gravel in certain patterns to make people feel at peace. Find ideas in photos of Zen gardens, then make your own. (With an adult's help, find easy instructions online.)

Step 3 Learn how to choose garden plants

Before you begin planting a garden, you have to learn how plants grow. For help, visit an arboretum (a place where professionals show off their plants and gardens), a local nursery, or ask a gardening expert. In each choice, ask your helper how much water and sunlight a plant will need to stay healthy.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Find six plants that will grow in your hardiness zone. Learn which plant zone you live in and which plants like your local climate and type of soil.

OR

Find six plants that grow in different ways. A gardener can begin to grow a plant from a seed, a bulb, or from roots. Find two plants you could grow from seeds, two from bulbs, and two from roots that are likely to do well in your garden.

OR

Find six seasonal plants. Some plants only grow during certain seasons. Find three plants that would do well during the time of year you'd like to grow your garden. Ask whether your plants are "annuals," which only grow one season and then die, or "perennials," which come back every year.

Step 4 Experiment with seeds

If you can, do this step where you'll plant your garden in step 5. It should be a place where the plants can get plenty of sunlight and not too many people will bother them. Using an empty egg carton and 12 seeds from a plant you like, experiment with what works best when growing plants in your space.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Experiment with soil. In two sections of the carton, add two tablespoons of soil. In the next two sections, add only one. Add one seed to each section. Cover the seeds with some of the soil and add a little water every day.

OR

Experiment with water. Add two tablespoons of potting soil and a seed to each of four sections. Water two sections every day and water the two other sections every three days.

OR

Experiment with sunlight. Add two tablespoons of potting soil and a seed to each of four sections. Cover two sections with paper cups. Add the same amount of water every day to all four sections.

Step 5 Grow your own garden

Create your own garden with the six plants you found in step 3, six from a nursery, or six from a friend or neighbor who really loves to garden. Follow the spacing and planting directions that come with them, and be sure to ask for help with planting and permission for your space.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Plant an outdoor garden. If you have access to a yard, perhaps there's a plot you can use. Or you might plant a garden in a small planter or an outdoor window box.

OR



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Plant an indoor garden. Houseplants can be part of beautiful indoor gardens. If you have access to a greenhouse or hothouse, you could grow your indoor garden there—or perhaps at a sunny spot inside your own home!

OR

Help with planting at a community or school garden. Many schools and cities offer public gardening spaces. There might be a garden at your place of worship, your library, or in front of town hall. Perhaps one of these places could use your gardening help?

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Helping out at a community or school garden
- Sharing my flowers and vegetables with a nursing home or food bank
- Creating a vegetable garden for my family

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