Alphabet Garden Unit

Grade Level: 1

Larger IGS Unit: Gardens

Season: Fall and Spring

**Essential Questions:** Why do we have gardens and farms? How do we use library resources to help us plan our garden? How do we take care of our garden?

This Unit is a series of 6 lessons, 3 to be done in the Fall and 3 to be done in the Spring.

**Fall Lessons**

*Lesson 1: Introduction to the garden*

**Essential Question:** What kinds of stories can be told about gardens?

**Objective:** Students

**Materials:** *Making Vegetable Soup* and *The Rainbow Garden* by Louis Elhert; clipboards and pencils for students to use outside

**Introduction:** People design all different kinds of gardens and tell different stories about them. Sing alphabet song. Do you think we can come up with something to be found in the garden that starts with each letter in the alphabet? This fall we will plan the garden, and make an alphabet garden book, and in the spring we will plant and make signs for our garden, so that everyone in the school learns about it.

**Activity:**
- Read Lois Elhert books *Making Vegetable Soup* and *The Rainbow Garden*.
- Go over ground rules for the garden
- Take alphabet tour of the garden (“What is this? What letter does it start with?”)
- Students sit in the garden and make lists of everything they see

*Lesson 2: Using Resources to Plan the Alphabet Garden*

**Essential Question:** Which resources can we use to come up with new ideas?

**Objective:** Students learn how to use library resources to answer their questions about gardens.

**Materials:** books on gardens, alphabet books, smart board

**Introduction:**
- Gather students around the smartboard.
- Ask students what “brainstorm” means. Tell them we are going to brainstorm the different things we could find in a garden that start with different letters of the alphabet.
Activity:

- Start with two easy letters. Have students brainstorm everything they could think of that COULD be found in a garden. They don’t have to be plants – they could be tools, insects, ideas, people, etc. Write all ideas up on the board.
- Try X, Y, or Z. Ask students: what should we do when we get stuck? What resources can we turn to?
  - Check out books that librarian has assembled
  - Look online
  - Ask friends or parents
  - Look at lists created during last lesson
  - Get creative!

Lesson 3: Our Garden: Our Positives and Constraints

Essential Question: What are the positives and limitations of our garden?

Objective: Students understand that garden plans are limited by climate and space.

Materials: iPads or notebooks, examples of books and signs from last year

Introduction: Last time we met we brainstormed to come up with all the ideas we possibly could for things in gardens that start with different letters of the alphabet. Today we want to use those ideas to plan our actual alphabet garden.

- Why couldn’t we do an avocado tree for A or an orange tree for O?
  - Discuss climate and spacing
- Introduce activity: We are going to make an alphabet garden book that will be our plan for our alphabet garden in the spring. Each of you is going to be assigned a letter, and you’ll get to choose one special thing that could grow or be found in our garden this spring that starts with that letter. In the spring we will turn these pictures into signs that we will plant in the garden. If you choose a vegetable, we will get to plant that vegetable. If you choose something that’s not a plant, we will still get to “plant” your sign in the garden. Once you have your idea okay-ed by a teacher, you can draw a picture of that thing in your ipad or notebook. If you need help coming up with an idea, use the resources from our last lesson (books, computers) or ask us for help!

Activity: first class: A-M, second class: N-Z

- A: ant, arugula
- B: bee, beans, basil, bamboo
- C: caterpillar, compost, carrots, cricket, cucumber
- D: digging, deer, dirt, dill, daddy long legs
- E: eggs, eating in the garden, eggplant
- F: flowers, fork
- G: garden, grasshopper
- H: hose, hoe
- I: insects
- J: johnny jump up flower
- K: kale
- L: leaves, lettuce
- M: marigold
- N: nasturtium
Spring Lessons:

Lesson 4: Value in the Garden

Essential Question: What makes each piece of the garden special and useful?

Objective: Students see value in all the diverse features of the garden.

*Have students sit in the order that they designed their pages

Introduction: What does it mean to “value” something? What do you value?

- Read through alphabet book made in the fall, having each student introduce their page

Activity: Students receive their signs and write a sentence on the back about why their piece of the garden is important or valuable.

Wrap up: Have students share what they found that was special about their garden item.

Lesson 5: Planting the Alphabet Garden

Essential Question: What helps plants grow?

Objective: Students understand the importance of healthy soil, plant spacing, and garden maintenance for healthy plants.

Introduction:

- There is a huge diversity of things that grow or live or are used in gardens. But what do all of these things need? Why do plants need healthy soil? Is soil alive? What do organisms in the soil do for plants?
- Go over ground rules for the garden
- Divide students into two groups to come out one at a time to plant

Activity:

- Students mix compost into the soil
- Students share planting
- Students plant their signs
Wrap Up/Assessment: How do we make sure our garden will grow? Encourage students to check on garden during recess.

Lesson 6: Observing the Alphabet Garden

Essential Question: What does our alphabet garden teach us about gardens in general?

Objective: Students understand that there is a whole world of things living, growing, and used in the garden, that are part of the ABCS. Students understand that the process of growing their alphabet garden tells a story.

Materials: Clipboards; paper; crayons/colored pencils

Introduction: Today we are going to go outside and see how are alphabet garden has changed. Then we can tell the story of our whole year garden project.

Activity:
• Let students quietly observe the garden: what do you see? What has changed?
• Hand out clipboards for students to do garden observation. Find a spot and draw what you see. Then label the letters of the alphabet you’ve found.

Wrap Up/Assessment:
• Share drawings and observations