Specialty Gardens: Creating Magical Spaces

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The 4-H Children’s Gardens

“The 4-H Children’s Garden is a magical place of learning.”
12-year-old
What is a Magical Space?

• Filled with Curiosity and Wonder
• A physical place (space)
• Experiences
How do you create magic spaces?

- Know your audience
- Think like your audience
- Don’t talk down to your audience
- Meet your audience’s needs
- Test spaces on kids – watch what they do
What do you need to know?

• About kids
• About gardens
About Kids

- Kids are curious and full of wonder
- Kids are concrete thinkers
- Kids like things that are familiar
- Kids don’t care about adult “gardening rules”
- Kids want and need hands-on
- Kids love to be surrounded by plants
- Kids experience things intensely
About Kids

• Kids are amazed by little things
• Kids will meet or exceed expectations
• Kids like to learn
• Kids learn based on what they already know
• Rules are made to be tested (broken)
• Kids notice the details
  NOT the vistas
About Gardens

- Garden “rules” are made to be broken
- Gardens come in all shapes and sizes
- Gardens appeal to all the senses
- Gardens should be hands-on (touched, smelled, hidden in, picked, …)
- Gardens are amazing!
- Gardens are FUN!!
- It is OK to have garden failures
How do you create magic?

- Start with Curiosity
- Think like a kid (be a kid)
- Think outside the garden bed lines
- Use Theme Gardens
- Create magical programs and activities
- Connect to the 4-H Children’s Garden
Curiosity - The Key!

Curiosity
Exploration
Discovery
Pleasure
Repetition
Mastery
Think like a kid (be a kid)

- Remember your favorite kid things
- Watch kids and listen to them
- Wonder about everything
- Remember that kids have 5 senses
- Be amazed and excited by little things
Think like a kid (be a kid)

• As a kid, you need to feel, smell, walk in, be a part of ... the garden
  - Straight paths are to run down
  - Grass is to walk on and roll in
  - Flowers are to smell
  - Everyone needs a place to hide
  - A maze is to get lost in

• Ask “What would happen if I broke that rule?” ... stepped on the grass??

• Focus on the details
  NOT the vistas
Involve kids

- Garden planning
- Planting
- Maintenance
- Activities
Think outside the garden bed lines

- What is a garden?
- Gardens come in all shapes and sizes
- All plants “go together”
- Show the entire life cycle
- Add ‘stuff’ to your garden
- Make it interactive
Theme Gardens Rule!!

- ABC Garden
- Pizza Garden
- Peter Rabbit Herb Garden
- Cereal Bowl Garden
- Teddy Bear and Animals Garden
- Crayon Color Garden
- Jack and the Giants Garden
4-H Children’s Gardens

- Outdoor 4-H Children’s Garden
  - About 2/3 acre
  - 65 theme areas

- Indoor 4-H Children’s Garden
  - 1500 square feet
  - 25 theme areas

- Curiosity Classroom
Magical spaces
ABC Garden

- Alyssum
- Basil
- Marigold
- Nasturtium
- Yarrow
- Zinnia
Peter Rabbit Herb Garden

- Beet 'MacGregor's Favorite'
- Radish 'French Breakfast'
- Rhubarb 'Valentine'
- Mint
- Lemon Balm
- Tansy
- Lavender
- Chamomile
Cereal Bowl Garden

- Corn for Cornflakes
- Wheat for Wheaties
- Rye for bread
- Oats for Oatmeal
- Buckwheat for pancakes
- Sugar Beets for sugar
Crayon Color Garden

- Strawberry pink
- Lavender
- Goldenrod
- Cornflower
- Dianthus pink
- Pumpkin
Teddy Bear and Animals

- Dandelions
- Spider plant
- Lamb’s ears
- Lambs quarters
- Snapdragon
- Goldfish plant
- Hens and chicks
Pizza Garden

- Wheat
- Tomato
- Basil
- Oregano
- Peppers
- Onions
- Marigold, “The Cheese”
Jack and the Giants Garden

- Climbing beans (Scarlet Runner)
- Giant sunflowers
- Arundo grass
Indoor 4-H Children's Garden
Around the World Herb Garden
My Favorite Foods Garden

- Strawberries
- Maple tree
- Potatoes
- Tomatoes
- Peanuts
- Chocolate mint
- Spaghetti squash
- Chives
- Aguga ‘Chocolate Chip’
Take a Deep Breath

Little lessons from flowers for a happier world
Follow Your Nose Garden
Michigan Garden

- Sand dunes
- ‘Big Mac’ bridge
- Plank road
Harry’s Herbology Garden

- Snake plant
- Sensitive plant
- Broom Corn
- Petunia
- Lupine
- Chocolate flower
- Coleus ‘Dragon’s Blood’
- Privet
- Spiral Staircase
Plants - the real magic!
Sensitive Plant
Eyeball Plant
Snapdragon
Broom Corn
Sunflower ‘Teddy Bear’
Cool Kid Plants

- Sensitive plant
- Eyeball plant
- Snapdragon
- Cherry tomato ‘Matt’s Wild Cherry’
- Basil ‘Magical Michael’
- Broom corn
- Chocolate Mint
- Sunflower ‘Teddy Bear’
- Scarlet Runner Bean
- Pumpkin ‘Cinderella’
Add stuff...

- Focus on the details
- Get them right!
Details, details, details
Monet Bridge
Make it interactive
Dance Chimes
“Big Mac” Bridge
Educational Programs

Planting curiosity,
Nurturing wonder,
Growing Understanding
Seeds of Science

- Day-long field trips
- Multi-day
- Visits separated by 1-2 weeks
- Specific between visit experiments, activities, connections
Seeds of Science
Family Programs

- Dinosaur Day
- Bug Day
- Teddy Bear Tea Party
- Around the World Jubilee
- Compost Day
- Plant Detectives
- Harvest Festival
Multi-day Summer Programs

- Stories in the Garden
- Kid Curator
- Garden Chefs
- Camp Monet
On-line Experiences

http://4hgarden.msu.edu/kidstour
Wonder Wall
The Magic

“We love coming here!”
“I love it here.”
“I love this place.”
“I broughted my mommy.”
Magic in the garden

“Let me show you this.”
“Oh, look!!”
“Come on!”
“Can I show you this?”
“I found the motherlode!”
"I like its technique – it looks like it is dead when it closes up - then animals will leave it alone."

"It looks like grasshopper wings."

"It's called the 'tickle me' plant."
ABC Garden

“I found my name!”
“I do the ABC’s.”
When it's time to leave

“I don’t want to leave”
“Can I stay here overnight?”
When it’s time to leave

“I can’t leave, I am part of the pizza.”
Creating magic spaces

- Use the information presented here
- Visit us in person
- Visit us on-line
- Incorporate the Wonder Wall into your garden
- Incorporate the PSA into your garden
- Stay connected to the 4-H Children’s Gardens
Contact Info

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http://4hgarden.msu.edu
http://4hgarden.msu.edu/kidstour
Learn more!

National Children and Youth Gardening Symposium

July 19-21, 2007
Minnesota Landscape Arboretum
Magic Garden Spaces

Look at a garden
Through a child’s eyes
It’s magic, it’s wonder
It’s full of surprise!