

"Caring For Your Garden," p.97. Beyond the Bean Seed. Jarenka, Nancy Allen & Blass, Rosanne J. Teacher Ideas Press, 1996.

7.4 Caring for the Garden

Hershey, Rebecca. *Ready. Set. Grow! A Kid's Guide to Gardening*. Goodyear, 1995. 104 pp. (P-I).

Divided into three parts, *Ready. Set. Grow!* tells children how to garden both indoors and outdoors. Acknowledging the interest nowadays in connecting gardening with children's literature, Hershey includes a reading list with each of her activities. Crafts, activities, and recipes are included in the third part. Caring for the garden, including the use of mulches fits this lesson.



Gardening Activity

Mulch Experiments

Gardeners mulch to control weeds and conserve water. Which type of mulch is best? With your group, conduct an experiment to find out. In the children's garden, set up three to five plots in which various mulches are used; try the usual such as straw, grass clippings, black plastic, and bark. Try the out-of-the-ordinary, such as thrown-away clothing, blankets, used coffee grounds (latte stands have been known to save their old grounds for gardeners), or cocoa bean hulls (if you live near Hershey, Pennsylvania).

Have your boys and girls log the number of weeds per square foot that appear in a certain number of days or the number of days it takes for the soil to become dry down to 1 inch beneath the surface. Discover which material is the most effective mulch. Be sure to account for the thickness of the mulch material.



Language Arts Activity

Foe Files

Have on hand file folders, manilla paper, paper towels, heavy books or a flower press, and transparent tape.

Weeds are a gardener's prime enemy. Weeds compete with garden plants for water and nutrients as well as harbor diseases and harmful insects. Identifying them is the first step in getting rid of them. Have your children pull up and press at least five weeds. Later, have them attach the pressed weeds to manilla paper, identify, and label them.

Have them decorate file folders and place their pressings in their file folder.

Another activity is to learn to identify weeds when they are in their beginning stages of growth.



Creative Activity

How to Cultivate Healthy Relationships and Groups

To cultivate a garden is to care for it so that the plants will live, thrive, and produce. It means to fertilize the plants so they have nutrients that will improve their leaves, blossoms, and stems; to water the garden so the plants will live; to keep it weed-free so the weeds won't compete for the nutrients and water. To cultivate a garden means to keep the plants free from diseases and pests that will attack and kill the plant; to protect the plants from their enemies.

How is caring for friendships, relationships, and groups the same as caring for a garden? How do we keep groups healthy, together, growing, and producing?

Have your boys and girls discuss these topics within smaller groups; perhaps each group could discuss one topic and synthesize their ideas. Then meet again as one large group to share their ideas and to fill out the chart below. Duplicate the chart on the chalkboard or on chart paper to facilitate the discussion.