Community Garden

A Shared Green Space for People and Nature

Keywords:

community, garden, cooperation, planning, nature, food, water, pollinators, shared responsibility, sustainability

Target group:

primary school pupils (ages 6-11)

Objectives:

This activity encourages pupils to think of a garden not only as a place for growing vegetables, but as a shared community space that brings people together, strengthens neighbourhood relationships, supports local biodiversity, and teaches responsibility. Pupils will design and build a model of a community garden that includes useful and meaningful elements such as raised beds, insect habitats, water-collecting systems, and spaces for social interaction. They will learn that gardens can be a hub for nature, education, and community building.
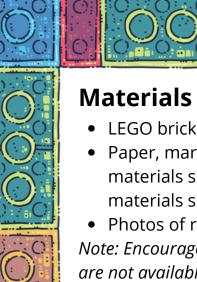
General Guideline on Time Allocation:

The duration needed to carry out this activity may vary depending on the specific group of children. Teachers are encouraged to adapt the implementation according to the needs, interests, and dynamics of the group.

In the preparatory phase, teachers may use a variety of activities to introduce and contextualize the chosen topic. These can include discussions, videos, drawings, storytelling, or even a field trip, depending on the age and background knowledge of the children.

The main construction phase, during which children plan and build their urban element using LEGO bricks, should typically not exceed 45 to 60 minutes. However, this phase often stimulates further curiosity and questions among the children, potentially leading to extended engagement or follow-up activities. For more detailed instructions and pedagogical support on how to implement activities of INNO–kids project, please download the Teacher's Methodological Guide.

Materials and Resources Needed:

- LEGO bricks of various types
- Paper, markers, crayons, and coloured pencils, scissors and glue, recycled materials such as plastic bottles, bottle caps, or packaging, natural materials such as seeds, bark, stones, leaves, dried flowers
- Photos of real community gardens (optional)

Note: Encourage pupils to repurpose available materials creatively. If LEGO bricks are not available, pupils may use basic craft supplies to bring their ideas to life through drawings and handmade models.

Introduction:

The goal is to create a garden that is inclusive, useful, and supports good relationships. Start with a simple question: "What is a community garden?" Guide pupils to understand that it is a shared garden cared for by a group of people who grow plants, meet, help each other, and take care of nature together.

Ask:

- Who might use such a garden?
- What could they grow or build there?
- How does such a space benefit both people and the environment?

Procedure:

Preparation

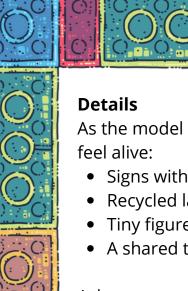On a large sheet of paper, pupils first sketch the layout of the garden. Then they:

- Create fictional or real characters representing neighbours
- Assign each character a part of the garden to design and maintain (e.g. compost area, herb spiral, wildflower bed, seating corner, pond…)
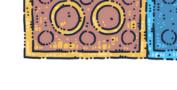- Discuss what each feature brings to the whole garden — fresh food, water, shelter for bees, a place to talk, etc.
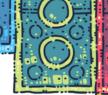
Construction

Pupils now begin building the model using LEGO, recycled, and/or natural materials. Each group or pupil contributes one part of the garden.

Key elements may include raised beds with vegetables or herbs, compost bin or worm farm, bug hotel or pollinator shelter, small pond or insect water source, rainwater collection barrel, shared seating area for rest or events, educational signs or a message board for neighbours…

Encourage creativity and practical thinking: Can someone in a wheelchair reach the beds? Is there enough space for people to move around? Where is the sunny side?

Details

As the model takes shape, pupils add thoughtful details that make the garden feel alive:

- Signs with plant names or messages like "Help yourself to mint"
- Recycled labels, colourful flags, or symbolic decorations
- Tiny figures doing different tasks — planting, watering, talking
- A shared tool corner or seed exchange box

Ask:

- What makes this a space where people feel welcome?
- What benefits does the garden bring to people and to nature?

Stories

Each group tells a short story about a character in the garden. It might be:

- An older neighbour sharing tomato seeds with a child
- A teenager building a bug hotel
- A parent teaching children how to compost
- A group of neighbours organising a "Garden Day" to harvest and celebrate

Stories show that community gardens are not just about plants — they are about connections and cooperation.

Presentation

Pupils present their garden as a whole, explaining:

- Who contributed what
- What each part is for and how it supports the whole
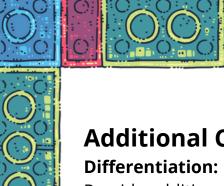- How people use the space together

Tips:

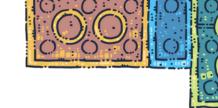Remind pupils that gardens grow over time. Ask:

- "How will this garden change with the seasons?"
- "How do we make sure it is cared for by everyone?"
- "What small detail makes this garden truly special?"

Additional Considerations:

Differentiation:
Provide additional support or simplified instructions for pupils who may require extra assistance. For advanced pupils, offer extension tasks such as researching further sustainable practices or designing more complex models.

Assessment:
Assess pupils based on their participation and engagement during discussions and hands-on activities. Evaluate the creativity, effort, collaboration, depth of understanding demonstrated in their models, critical thinking, ability to provide constructive feedback and presentation skills.

Extension Activities:
- Visit a real community garden or invite a gardener to speak
- Start a small indoor class herb garden
- Write "Garden Rules" for sharing and caring
- Design a poster promoting the benefits of shared green spaces

Curriculum Connections:

This activity integrates:
Science (plants, pollinators, composting, ecosystems)
Social Studies (cooperation, respect, shared responsibility)
Art (design, creativity, construction)
Language (storytelling, discussion, presentation skills)
Mathematics (spatial awareness, measurement, garden planning)

SDG Connections:

- **SDG 2:** Zero Hunger – Pupils grow their own healthy food and understand local food production.
- **SDG 11:** Sustainable Cities and Communities – Pupils create inclusive and green public spaces.
- **SDG 12:** Responsible Consumption and Production – Pupils use recycled materials and share tools and harvests.
- **SDG 13:** Climate Action – Pupils design gardens that store carbon and support resilience.
- **SDG 15:** Life on Land – Pupils support biodiversity through wild corners and insect shelters.