

We Skoolhouse



# Ready-Made Curriculum: Magical Gardens & Fairy Tales



# Introduction: Water Exploration

This month-long investigation invites children to explore the intersection of the natural world and the magical one. Through rich sensory experiences, natural materials, storytelling, and imaginative provocations, children will step into a world where gardens grow wild with wonder and fairy tales come to life through their own ideas and creations.

This unit is designed to move slowly, allowing children time to revisit materials, deepen questions, and engage with familiar books and provocations in evolving ways. While some activities are designed to build upon previous ones, others may be revisited spontaneously depending on children's interests. Flexibility is key—follow the rhythm of your group and extend where needed.

Teachers and caregivers are encouraged to emphasize autonomy, reflection, and process over product. Let children lead with their curiosity, shift materials between centers when inspired, and return to unfinished work with fresh eyes.

This guide includes daily prompts, journal ideas, suggested vocabulary, recommended books, and ways to incorporate the unit into centers. Use what fits, adjust what's needed, and let the children lead the way.

## Books Used Throughout the Unit:

- The Curious Garden by Peter Brown
- The Hidden Rainbow by Christie Matheson
- The Night Gardener by The Fan Brothers
- Fairy Science by Ashley Spires
- Planting a Rainbow by Lois Ehlert

## Vocabulary

garden, seed, bloom, soil, root, sprout, sunlight, rainbow, leaf, flower, vines, petals, compost, biodegradable, texture, weave, herb, botanical, ecosystem, habitat, transformation, pollination, camouflage, atmosphere, reflection, translucency, magic, fairy, wand, crown, potion, creature, storytelling, imagination, enchanted, whimsical

# Week 1: Entering the Garden

**Focus Concept:** Children explore real gardens—what they notice, what grows there, and how nature can feel magical.

**Weekly Objective:** To awaken children's senses to nature and spark curiosity through storytelling, sensory exploration, and open-ended creative invitations.

## Monday – Garden Walk & Wonder

### Morning Meeting

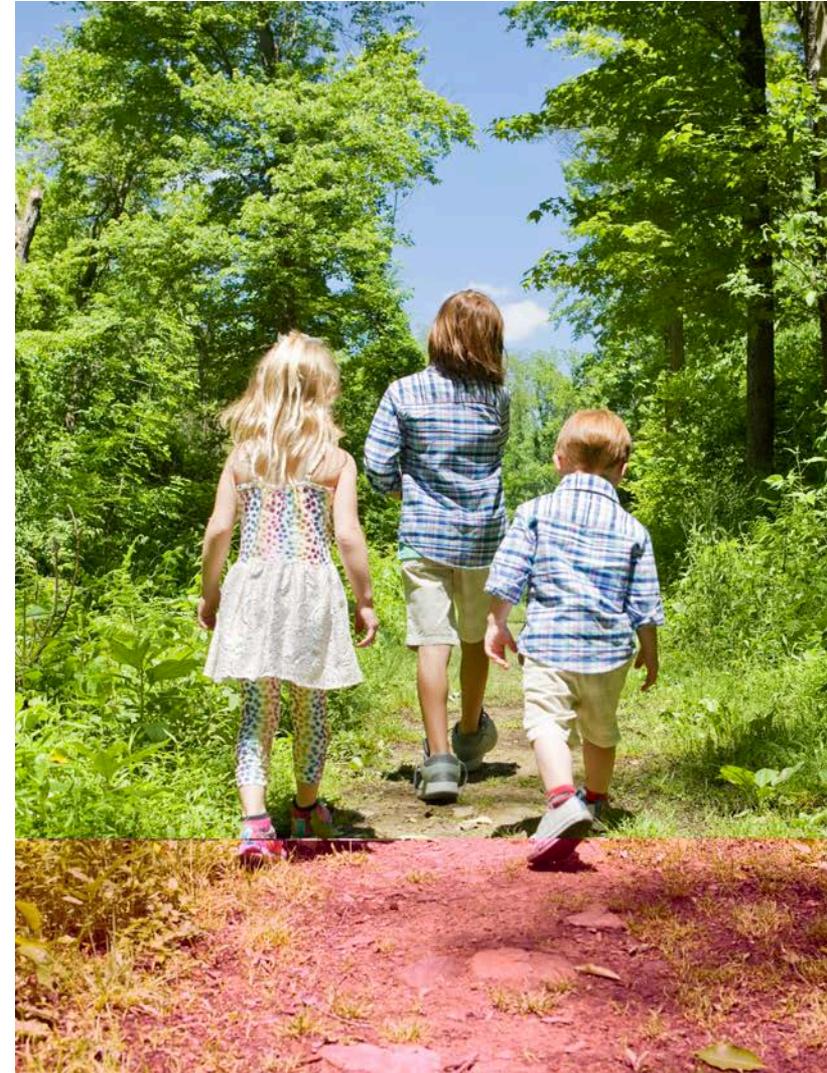
- Book: *The Curious Garden* by Peter Brown
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “What makes a garden grow?”
  - “How can we take care of living things?”
  - “What might live in or visit a magical garden?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Take a neighborhood or school garden walk. Bring clipboards for drawing observations. Collect a few small natural artifacts (leaves, petals, twigs) to begin our class nature collection.
- Journal Prompt: “Draw something you found in the garden. What do you think it does?”

### Closing Circle

- Discuss: “What do you want to learn about gardens?”
- Start a Wonder Wall: Children may add drawings, questions, or words.



## Tuesday – Nature Weaving Boards

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Curious Garden
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “What colors or shapes did you notice in the garden?”
  - “How can we use those in our art?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Introduce nature weaving boards: Stretch rubber bands over cardboard. Children choose natural materials (from yesterday's walk or you can go and collect more today) to weave in—leaves, grass, petals, herbs.
- Journal Prompt: “What textures did you feel? Did anything surprise you?”

### Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What made you choose the materials you worked with today?”



## Wednesday – Textured Garden Paint Brushes

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Hidden Rainbow by Christie Matheson
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “How do gardens change in different seasons?”
  - “What does color tell us about nature?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Make garden-inspired paintbrushes using twigs and different “heads,” e.g. flowers, leaves, etc.
- Children may explore painting with these tools on easel or watercolor paper.
- Journal Prompt: “What did your brush feel like?”

### Closing Circle

- Discuss the difference between regular paintbrushes and ones made from nature.



## Thursday – Garden Small World Play

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Hidden Rainbow
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “What might live in this garden?”
  - “What would your magical garden sound like?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Set up a garden small world tray with real dirt, moss, stones, twigs, silk flowers, tree bark, and small animals or fairy figures. Children are free to build, narrate, and move materials.
- Journal Prompt: “Who visited your garden today?”

### Closing Circle

- Share small world stories and scenes created.



## Friday – Magical Garden Suncatchers

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Night Gardener by The Fan Brothers
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “What does it mean to transform something?”
  - “What shapes would you design if you were a night gardener?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Create garden suncatchers using contact paper and collected flat natural materials (leaves, petals, grass). Frame in paper plate or cardboard rings or upcycled lids and hang near windows.
- Optional: offer garden small world play at another table for continued small world play.

### Closing Circle

- Reflect on the week: “What was your favorite way to explore the garden?”



# Week 2: Imagining the Magic

**Focus Concept:** Children bring gardens to life with their imaginations—creating magical characters, stories, and symbolic props.

**Weekly Objective:** To explore narrative thinking through character-based art and storytelling, deepening imaginative play and collaborative expression.

## Monday – Magical Character Provocation Painting

### Morning Meeting

- Book: *The Night Gardener* by The Fan Brothers
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “Who do you think the night gardener really is?”
  - “What kind of magical being would you find in a garden?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Set out character provocation trays with printed images from fairy tales, folklore, and nature creatures (fairies, trolls, owls, dryads). Children use watercolors, pastels, or tempera to paint their own imagined garden dweller.
- Journal Prompt: “What is your character’s name? What do they do in the garden?”

### Closing Circle

- Invite children to share details about their characters.



## Tuesday – Design Your Own Magical Crown

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Curious Garden
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “What would a fairy king or queen wear?”
  - “What kind of crown helps you take care of the garden?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Children design their own magical crowns using paper strips, foil, flowers, ribbon, gems, leaves, and other natural materials.
  - You can also bring the children outside to collect more natural materials to use.
- Journal Prompt: “What does your crown help you do?”

### Closing Circle

- Crown parade and storytelling: “Tell us one rule in your magical garden.”



## Wednesday – Wand Maker's Station

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Hidden Rainbow
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “What powers could a garden wand have?”
  - “How can we make something look magical using natural things?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Set up a wand-making station with twigs, wire, fabric scraps, yarn, flowers, feathers, glitter, and ribbon. Children may twist, wrap, glue, or tie to create their own enchanted tool.
- Journal Prompt: “What does your wand do? What's your first spell?”

### Closing Circle

- Wand circle: Each child shares their wand and power if they choose.



## Thursday – Build a Fairy House

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Night Gardener
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “Where might a fairy sleep?”
  - “How do we make a tiny home feel safe?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Use natural and recycled loose parts to create fairy houses: bark, sticks, moss, acorn caps, cardboard, bottle caps, fabric scraps. Small cardboard bases can help structure.
  - This can be an individual or collaborative experience and if accessible, children can create these homes outside and leave for fairies and magical creatures.
- Journal Prompt: “Who will live in your house? What makes it cozy?”

### Closing Circle

- Gallery walk of fairy houses with gentle music. Reflect on what details were included.



## Friday – Magical Small World Theater

### Morning Meeting

- Book: Planting a Rainbow by Lois Ehlert
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “What if a seed grew into a magical tree?”
  - “How do we make a story together?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Set up a magical small world theater: draped fabric, puppets, small props (from fairy houses and characters). Children collaborate to create and perform mini-scenes.
- Journal Prompt: “What part did you play in the story?”

### Closing Circle

- Celebrate collective storytelling. Add new questions or ideas to the Wonder Wall.



# Week 3: Potions, Experiments, and Transformations

**Focus Concept:** Children explore the magical qualities of change through sensory experiments, mixing, and imaginative play.

**Weekly Objective:** To observe and explore how materials transform—visually, physically, or symbolically—through mixing, combining, dissolving, and reacting.

## Monday – Magical Potion Lab

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Hidden Rainbow
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “What happens when you mix certain things together?”
  - “What would your magic potion do?”
- Follow-Up Investigation
  - Offer baking soda, vinegar, glitter, dried flowers, colored water, small jars, and droppers. Children mix and react—watching fizzes, color blends, and changes.
- Journal Prompt: “What did you mix? What happened next?”

### Closing Circle

- Group share: “What does your magic potion do?” Add new descriptive words to the Wonder Wall.



## Tuesday - Magical Garden Mapping

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Curious Garden by Peter Brown
- Discussion Prompts:
  - "What might you find in a magical garden?"
  - "If you were to walk through one, what path would you take?"

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Offer a large collaborative paper roll (or individual sheets) with colored pencils, markers, watercolor pencils, and natural materials. Children are invited to draw or map an imagined magical garden. Encourage the use of symbols, winding paths, special landmarks (e.g., mushroom houses, fairy circles, potion wells). Add natural materials or collage elements like moss, leaves, or dried flowers to enhance texture.

### Closing Circle

- Walk through each child's section of the map or the group garden. "What makes this garden magical?" Invite continued contributions throughout the week.

## Wednesday –Mixing Table: Colors + Material

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Hidden Rainbow by Christie Matheson
- Discussion Prompts:
  - "What materials can mix? What can't?"
  - "What does it feel like when two things combine?"

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Set up mixing trays with shaving cream, liquid watercolor, salt, flour, rice, oil, and water. Let children explore textures and reactions.
- Journal Prompt: "What materials mixed? What changed?"

### Closing Circle

- "Did anything surprise you today?" Invite observations and new mixing ideas.



## Thursday - Magical Garden Figure Sculpting

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Night Gardener by The Fan Brothers
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “What features would your figure have—wings, petals, vines, sparkles?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Offer clay along with loose parts and natural items (twigs, seed pods, leaves, shells, stones, fabric scraps, etc.). Invite children to sculpt a magical garden character—fairies, guardians, gnomes, or creatures of their own invention.
- Journal Prompt: “Who is your magical garden figure? What do they do?”

### Closing Circle

- Display figures on a communal table or shelf. Invite children to introduce their character and share its powers or purpose.



## Friday – Build a Fairy or Creature House

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Curious Garden by Peter Brown (revisit – focus on the way space transforms over time)
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “Where do magical creatures sleep or hide?”
  - “What would make them feel cozy in your garden?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Set out trays of natural and upcycled materials: bark, moss, acorns, shells, cardboard, sticks, and pebbles. Invite children to build fairy or garden creature homes. These can be individual or collaborative builds, on tables or outdoors.
- Journal Prompt: “Who lives in the home you built? What makes it special?”

### Closing Circle

- Tour each home together. Ask: “How can we protect these magical spaces?” Add reflections or questions to the Wonder Wall.

# Week 4: Magic in Our Hands – Storytelling & Reflections

**Focus Concept:** Storytelling, Magical Transformation, and Final Reflections

**Weekly Objective:** Children will revisit and synthesize the themes of gardens, growth, fantasy, and creativity by designing magical stories, building symbolic props, and reflecting on their journey through this imaginative landscape.

## Monday – Create a Garden Story Stone Set

### Morning Meeting

- Book: *The Hidden Rainbow* by Christie Matheson
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “What are the colors and creatures in your magical garden?”
  - “What stories could happen there?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Offer smooth stones along with paint pens or acrylic paints, brushes, and sealant. Encourage children to create their own set of garden story stones.
- Once dry, these can be used for collaborative storytelling or individual play.

### Closing Circle

- Model how to tell a short story using just a few stones. Invite volunteers to share their stone set and begin a story with the group.



## Tuesday - Magical Garden Potion Lab (Revisit)

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Curious Garden
- Discussion Prompts:
  - "What kind of potion would help a garden bloom?"
  - "What ingredients would go into your magical recipe?"

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Create a potion-making lab using small bowls, jars, and measuring cups. Set out materials like baking soda, vinegar, water, glitter, dried flowers, etc. Children combine and test their concoctions.
- Journal Prompt: "What's in your potion? What does it do?"

### Closing Circle

- Discuss what kind of change each potion could bring.



## Wednesday – Storytelling with Small World Play (Revisit)

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Night Gardener by The Fan Brothers (revisit – focus on how characters and setting create a story)
- Discussion Prompts:
  - "What happens when your garden comes to life?"
  - "Who visits your magical garden?"

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Set up trays and bins with loose parts, small figurines, natural materials, and blocks. Children are invited to create a small world setting and tell a story through play. Provide story mats, cardboard panels, or mossy cloth as bases.
- Journal Prompt: "What happened in your story today?"

### Closing Circle

- Invite children to describe their small world stories or act them out. Document emerging storylines and character development for your classroom portfolio.



## Thursday -Step Into the Story: Dramatic Play Day

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Curious Garden
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “What kind of character do you think you might be today?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Set up an open dramatic play space using large fabrics, scarves, and soft loose parts. Provide capes, ribbon belts, play silks, and costume baskets with items like cardboard wings (with clear contact paper or cellophane inserts), paper crowns, and handmade wands from earlier in the unit.

### Closing Circle

- Invite children to reflect on what their characters experienced or discovered. Consider taking photos for documentation or creating a simple group class book from the children’s dictated stories.



## Friday – Culmination Garden Installation & Reflection

### Morning Meeting

- Book: The Night Gardener by The Fan Brothers
- Discussion Prompts:
  - “What parts of our magical garden do you remember best?”
  - “What do you think visitors would see or feel if they entered our garden?”

### Follow-Up Investigation

- Create a collaborative Magical Garden Installation using the work from throughout the unit:
- Display nature weaving boards, suncatchers, artwork, collages, and clay garden figures
- Set up a small world area with story stones and natural loose parts for play

### Closing Circle

- Gather in the completed space and take a slow walk through the “garden.” Invite reflections:
  - “What do you feel proud of?”
  - “What will you remember most about our time in the magical garden?”
- Celebrate with a calming end-of-unit ritual—perhaps sitting in a circle surrounded by the artwork and/or a shared snack.

# About Centers, Provocations, and Materials

The following center setups and materials are designed to support the investigation across the unit. The intention is not to do everything at once—but to select, rotate, and adapt based on the children's interests, developmental needs, and the rhythm of the group.

These ideas should be seen as options to choose from, not a checklist to complete. Overloading the space with too many choices can overwhelm young children. Instead, offer a small number of materials at a time, and observe how children engage with them before introducing more.

## **You might choose to:**

- Keep certain materials consistent for multiple weeks to allow for repetition and mastery.
- Rotate in new elements slowly to spark renewed interest or deeper thinking.
- Modify invitations to become more complex or more accessible as needed.

## **Children should be welcomed to:**

- Make choices about how and where they work within the classroom.
- Move materials between areas (when appropriate) to support their ideas or projects.
- Combine materials across centers to create more layered and meaningful representations.
- Take responsibility for the tools they use by helping to return them when finished.

While autonomy is encouraged, a sense of shared care and responsibility is expected. In all cases, the role of the adult is to:

- Observe how materials are used and what thinking is emerging.
- Document children's approaches, choices, and discoveries.
- Decide when to step back, when to scaffold, and when to offer something new.





## Art Studio

**Purpose:** Encourage self-expression, layering, and creativity using textures, color, and storytelling.

### Materials & Setup Options:

- **Nature-Inspired Paint Brushes:** Invite children to use brushes with heads made from twigs, leaves, flower petals, and pine needles.
- **Character Portraits:** Set up printed images of fairies, elves, talking animals, and magical beings. Add drawing materials and watercolor for imaginative interpretation.
- **Clay Garden Sculptures:** Natural clay, tools, and garden artifacts (twigs, bark, pebbles) to create magical garden figures.
- **Suncatcher Station:** Clear contact paper, tissue paper, petals, cellophane, and other natural items to design hanging “magic light” pieces.

**Notes:** Include prompts like “What would your magical creature look like?” and “What does this garden piece remind you of?”

# Science & Discovery

**Purpose:** Support observation, experimentation, and connection to nature and natural processes.

## Materials & Setup Options:

- **Light and Color Play:** Prism jars, color paddles, suncatchers near the window, mirrored trays to reflect natural objects.
- **Plant Dissection & Sketching:** Provide real flowers (ideally from nature walks) and magnifying lenses. Invite children to carefully open them and sketch what they find inside.
- **Scent Station:** Herbs, flowers, citrus peels, and spice jars. Children smell and sort by strength, type, or memory.
- **Potion Lab Extension:** Offer pipettes, funnels, and clear containers for mixing colored water with herbs and fizzing agents.

**Notes:** Add descriptive vocabulary cards (e.g., "petal," "stem," "aroma," "transparent," "combine").

# Sensory Table

**Purpose:** Offer rich, open-ended sensory experiences that support imaginative play, motor development, and scientific observation.

## Materials & Setup Options:

- **Garden Texture Bin:** Soil or potting mix base with added elements like fake worms, stones, leaves, dried flower petals, sticks, seed pods, and magnifying glasses.
- **Water Garden Bin:** Water with floating petals, shells, glass gems, lily pads (foam circles), and small fairy or frog figurines. Add ladles, cups, and sieves for water transfer and sorting.
- **Magical Mud Kitchen:** Add cornstarch and water (or soil and water) to create messy sensory mixtures. Offer small bowls, spoons, herbs, and "ingredients" for mud pies or pretend brews.

**Notes:** Do not rotate materials too quickly as children need time to revisit materials and concepts. You can slightly tweak and add new objects based on interest and engagement.



## Dramatic Play

**Purpose:** Support role play, imagination, and symbolic expression in a fantasy-rich environment.

### Materials & Setup Options:

- **Fantasy Costume Collection:** Fabric capes, silks, crowns, wands, and ribbon belts.
- **Cardboard Wings & Accessories:** Pre-cut wing shapes with contact paper inserts or cellophane, decorated with natural materials.
- **Fairy Potion Maker:** Set up a sensory bin or tray with jars, scoops, dried flowers, glitter, colored water, baking soda, and vinegar for potion creation.
- **Small World Garden:** Logs, moss, bark, peg dolls, small animals, and fairy figurines for storytelling in a tiny garden landscape.

**Notes:** Allow children to invent stories or roles and return to them throughout the week. Avoid scripting play—observe and document emergent themes.

# Blocks and Construction

**Purpose:** Explore design, collaboration, and spatial problem-solving through imaginative construction.

## Materials & Setup Options:

- **Garden Building:** Add artificial flowers, moss, bark, tree blocks, and wood slices for constructing magical gardens.
- **Fantasy Structures:** Small dolls, fairies, animals, and natural materials for building fairy houses or woodland castles.
- **Coral & Magic Tree Sculptures:** Pipe cleaners, sticks, string, and wooden bases for constructing imaginative, growing forms.
- **Taped Reference Photos:** Real-life images of intricate gardens, flowers, fairy homes, and fantasy architecture taped to block bins.

**Notes:** Encourage children to draw blueprints or document their building through photos or sketches.

# Literacy Center

**Purpose:** Promote early writing, dictation, symbol use, and story-building.

## Materials & Setup Options:

- **Story Scrolls:** Long paper rolls where children collaboratively build and draw magical narratives.
- **Character Word Cards:** Illustrated cards with words like "fairy," "goblin," "wand," "rainbow," "magic," "garden," "flower," etc.
- **Garden Journal Table:** Journals available each day, along with prompts from Morning Meeting or Closing Circle.
- **Letter Stones & Nature Words:** Stones with letters and laminated word cards featuring nature and garden vocabulary.

**Notes:** Support children in dictating their ideas if not yet writing. Invite story sharing at Circle Time or add to the Wonder Wall.





**" Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere." — Albert Einstein**