

# Cultivating peace



## Lesson Plan

Lesson title	Cultivating peace
Learning objective	Pupils learn how working in a garden or working with others to create a garden can cultivate both inner and outer peace.
Pupils will:	Learn that acts of devotion can involve practical activities, including gardening. Articulate how working with others to create or plan a communal garden can cultivate peace.
Key words	Devotion, rehabilitation, gardening, community gardens

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<p><b>Introduction</b> Explain to the class that in this lesson they are going to look at ways that working in a garden can cultivate peace, both inner peace and peace amongst people.</p>	
<p><b>Activity 1</b> Start with a meditation exercise. Ask the class to close their eyes. Then get them to imagine a garden. Take them on a walk round this garden, conjuring different scenes, like wonderful beds of spring flowers, then a vegetable patch full of their favourite vegetables. Maybe they can pick a ripe tomato from a vine and eat it. Take them to a bench where they can sit under a tree in blossom. Get them to imagine blossom raining down on them. Then get them to imagine fruit ripening on the tree, fruit that they can pick and eat, fresh from the tree. At each location, get them to imagine the sights, smells and sounds. Also get them to imagine how they feel in these places.</p> <p>When they've completed the exercise, get them to share some of their feelings about the various sights. Then, perform the exercise again, this time getting them to imagine that the garden was one they had created, that they – along with friends, family and/or neighbours – had done all the work of planting and nurturing the garden. How would they feel then? What different feelings (e.g. satisfaction and/or pride) might they experience?</p>	



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#### Activity 2

Introduce the term devotion.

Some definitions of devotion:

- Ardent love
- Commitment to some purpose
- Willingness to serve God, for instance through acts of charity, e.g. working with disadvantaged people.
- Willingness to serve humanity unselfishly (a religious and a humanist ideal).

Explain that any task, large or small, can be devotion if it is done selflessly and with love. As an example, let someone read the quote from the Bhagavad Gita **(see Resources)**.

Remind them, if they have studied Islam, that the word Islam means both 'peace' and 'submission', i.e. submitting their lives to the will of Allah.

As another example of devoted service, remind them of the Sikh Langar (free kitchen), where Sikhs perform sewa (service) by preparing food and serving it to anyone who comes to the gurdwara. The food is always vegetarian so that anyone can eat it.

*"Set your heart upon your work, but never on its reward. Work not for a reward, but never cease to do your work"* (Bhagavad Gita, 2:47).

In this passage Krishna is encouraging the warrior Arjuna to fulfil his duty, but to do it selflessly; in other words, Arjuna is being encouraged to let God (i.e. Krishna) work *through* him.

#### Activity 3

Ask the class if anyone has a garden and if they grow vegetables in that garden. If they don't have a garden, do their parents or anyone they know have an allotment? If they do, do they share the things that grow in the garden with anyone? If they live in a flat or tower block, does anyone they know grow tomatoes or herbs on their windowsill or balcony? Discuss the difference between an allotment worked by one family and a community garden **(Resource 1)**. Do members of the class know of any local community gardens? Do they know of any derelict plots of land that could be turned into a community garden?

Explain that you are now going to look at three examples of how working in a garden can create peace and a sense of community. The first is community gardens and as an example look at the Bronx Green-up project, that helps

#### Resource 1: Background information on community gardens

Bronx Green-up project [http://www.nybg.org/green\\_up/comm\\_gard.php](http://www.nybg.org/green_up/comm_gard.php)

Images from the Bronx Green up project

[http://www.nybg.org/green\\_up/images.php](http://www.nybg.org/green_up/images.php)

Guerrilla gardening

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla\\_gardening](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla_gardening)

Guerrilla gardening blog

<http://www.guerrillagardening.org/>

Federation of city farms and community gardens in the UK:

<http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/>



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<p>residents of the Bronx region of New York City to transform vacant lots into community gardens. (You can show the class some images from the website image gallery.) As an alternative look at the phenomena of guerrilla gardening, especially if you are doing this activity with older children.</p>	
<p><b>Activity 4</b> Working in a garden can also bring together people from different communities. As an example, tell children a bit about the work of Jerusalem Botanical Gardens (<b>Resource 2</b>), and how their educational programmes have been drawing together local Jewish and Muslim children.</p> <p>Can the class think of other groups of people that might usefully work together? For instance young people helping older people in protected housing to create a garden, where the young people might be able to do the work in building a garden designed by the less able residents.</p>	<p><b>Resource 2:</b> Surkes, S. (2011) Building bridges over divided communities: the work of the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens, <i>Roots</i> 8,1, pp. 24-26</p>
<p><b>Activity 5</b> The final example to consider is prison gardens, which, in addition to creating a sense of community amongst the inmates, can actually help rehabilitate prisoners, and give them a sense of purpose and inner peace.</p> <p>Set out the following scenarios and ask the class to rate them in the order of what they think might have the best effect on the prisoners as compared to what might have the worst? (Suggest to the class that they try and empathise with the living conditions of each set of prisoners.) What, if any of these scenarios, might help rehabilitate prisoners and give them some sense of self esteem and inner peace?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Prisoners who are locked in a cell with a view of only a concrete yard.</li> <li>■ Prisoners who are kept in a cell that has a window with a view of a garden.</li> <li>■ Prisoners who are forced to work in cotton fields picking cotton in the sweltering sun.</li> <li>■ Prisoners who are allowed to work in a thriving garden, the produce of which is donated to people in need.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Resource 3:</b> Background information on the Horticulture Programme at the San Francisco County Jail</p> <p><b>Quote from Catherine Sneed, founder of The Garden Project:</b> “Today, for most prisoners, the work begins in a greenhouse with small plants that need constant nurturing. Each person cares for particular plants and learns, by watching them grow, the true nature of this life: growth, renewal, and perseverance. Somewhere during the time spent quietly working the earth, something happens and something changes. Witnessing the cycle of growth and renewal allows the prisoners to see their own potential for growth and change. People often ask me what I did to inspire people to work. I tell them that it wasn’t me, it was the plants.”</p> <p><i><a href="http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/is-it-time-to-close-the-prisons/seeds-of-change">http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/is-it-time-to-close-the-prisons/seeds-of-change</a></i></p>



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Tell the class a bit about the work of the Horticulture Programme at the San Francisco County Jail (**Resource 3**). Share the quote from Catherine Sneed, founder of The Garden Project (**see Resources**).

#### Activity 6

Role play activity

Talk to the pupils about what a community is and ask them to suggest who the different members of the community might be. This might include school children, teachers, sports groups, members of a mosque /church and shop keepers, etc. Divide the pupils into groups of five and explain that each pupil will represent a different member of the community. Explain that they are going to work together to act out the creation of a community garden. Discuss the different jobs they might need to do – e.g. clearance, designing the garden/park, building and maintaining the site.

Ask each group to devise three photographs that capture the process of creating a garden: (1) initial meeting and discussion of community members, (2) building the garden, and (3) opening the garden.

Remind the pupils that it is important to think about the emotion of each character and to show the facial expression as well as their body posture. Give them a time limit (two minutes for each photo).

With one or two of the groups, you can introduce **thought-tracking**. Explain that you are going to ask individual characters to speak their thoughts or feelings aloud - just one or a few words. When the group are in position, tap each person on the shoulder in turn. Ask them to speak the word or words as though they are the character. When all the groups have worked out the three images, sit the class down and **spotlight** each group in turn by asking them to show their three images. Count from one to three to lead them through each image. Encourage the rest of the class to observe each member of the group carefully, so that they can try to guess what member of the community and job they are representing. Ask the class why it might be 'spiritually' important to create a garden?



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#### Plenary

Review the role play activity and ask pupils whether they can see a difference between doing jobs as a necessity or doing them as a service to the community, e.g. sorting rubbish into different recycling bins.

Ask pupils how they think gardening could be seen as an act of devotion.

If they were to do weeding in a communal garden: how different might they feel if they were doing it as a devotion as compared to being told they had to weed before they could play with their friends?

Ask pupils to explain the ways this project might 'cultivate peace' and contribute to community cohesion

Pupils may be able to:

1. Talk about the jobs that might be needed to create a garden
2. Talk about how working in a garden can bring people together.
3. Discuss the difference between having to work in a garden as a chore and doing it unselfishly in order to serve the community.
4. Discuss the different ways that working with others in a garden can transcend differences and create understanding between people of different beliefs and backgrounds.
5. Explain how working in a garden can 'cultivate peace' and contribute to community cohesion, using at least two specific examples.