



KEY INFORMATION

Key skills targeted:

- Sensory processing
- Emotional regulation

Age range:

- All

Staffing implications:

Consider the age, stage and developmental needs of the pupil for independent or supported access.

Resources needed:

May include planting, seating, raised beds and plant pots.

Likely outcomes:

- Supports sensory processing needs
- Promotes relaxation and emotional well-being
- Provides a calming space
- May reduce anxiety

Creating a sensory outdoor space



AIMS

A sensory garden aims to be a quiet relaxing space that stimulates the five main sense of touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing.

OVERVIEW

The development of sensory gardens for autistic children and young people is becoming more prevalent to support sensory development, and offers a mindfulness and relaxing space which promotes body awareness, within a school setting.



Who will this benefit?

The pupil who has sensory integration and sensory processing difficulties which impacts their concentration and emotional state in the classroom. Creating a sensory outdoor space may support:

- Sensory development
- Promote body awareness
- Promote Mindfulness
- Allow a pupil the opportunity to engage with their environment

How to implement

Consider both space and budget when establishing a sensory garden. Remember that this does not have to be a large space but would ideally, be located, in a quieter area of the school site. Adding scented hanging baskets or a collection of planted tactile pots or raised beds within a seating area can be just as effective.

Try to include elements within the garden that will stimulate the five main senses of touch, smell, hearing, sight, and taste. Below are some suggestions:

Sight- consider shape, colour and plants of different heights. Give consideration to a variety of colour and the properties they have. For example, colours such as blue and purple have a calming effect, green supports rebalance and soothes, orange is the colour of energy and optimism. Plants with definition and repeated patterns such as ferns can help us to relax as they are easier for brains to process. You may also like to add visual stimuli such as mobiles, suncatchers and bunting.

Hearing- Consider using gently swaying plants such as grasses that create movement and sound. The addition of musical instruments such as tubing of different lengths that can be tapped with a stick, wind chimes or bird feeders to encourage birdsong, water features or a bird bath and different surfaces such as gravel may also enhance your garden.

Smell- Consider using plants such as lavender, rosemary or bay that have aromatic leaves that release scent when they are touched.

Touch- Include different textures and surfaces within the garden. You may like to include steppingstones, rocks and sculptures and robust plants that have furry leaves or soft flowers that can be touched.



Taste-You may like to consider the addition of a fruit and vegetable patch or an herb garden to help explore taste and texture.

You may wish to access the Royal Horticultural Society website to ensure you are not using thorny, toxic, or irritant plants.

Next steps

Identify children with sensory processing difficulties who would benefit from access to this garden. You may like to use an individual sensory audit to ascertain this information. Please contact your specialist teacher for more information.

When a suitable mix of children with varying sensory needs has been chosen and a risk assessment and allergy check has taken place, establish times of day that the pupil can access this space. Dependent on the pupil and environment you create you can decide whether this is supported/unsupported. This will depend on a child's developmental stage and their individual needs.