

Ideas for Youth Activities Groups

General:

Civic Projects	Arbor Day	Gardening	Growing Plants
Recycling	Litter Control	Service to Seniors	Conservation
Flower Show	Flower Arranging	Field Trips	Bird Study
Insect Study	Service to Handicapped		

Have your club save their recyclables that can be used for craft projects. Collect them and distribute to pre-schools or kindergarten classes in your community.

Contact grade schools in your area and ask if they need help with any gardens they have or if they wish to plant a garden. Find a willing teacher or two and get the kids out and planting or cleaning up. Also, don't overlook science teachers, many clubs find they are very willing to get the kids involved.

Be available to go to classes and speak about conservation or gardening. Perhaps send a letter to each school principal in your area letting them know you are available for in-school programs or after-school workshops.

Contact your local Scout Groups. Girl Scouts now have a badge for gardening and conservation. Ask the Leaders how you can help out.

Celebrate Arbor Day by planting a bush or tree at a willing school, nursing home, civic location, etc.

Having trouble breaking into the 'school scene'? Ask your club members if they have children or grandchildren who would have fun being involved with a gardening group. The Webster Hill G.C. in West Hartford takes a similar but more self-directed route by having each member do a small plot of gardening involving not only their kids and grandkids but neighborhood children as well, instructing them, providing plants and seeds, encouraging watering and experiencing the results during the summer.

Contact your mayor or selectman and find out if the local police station, public works or fire station might like a garden.

Contact the PTO chairman at each school in your area. Many times they sponsor special programs both during school and after-school programs.

Check to see if one of your schools may have a greenhouse. Many of these are underused and need some help, both in maintenance and cleanup. This is an ideal spot to teach in and show kids the wonder of plants.

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Do you have a nature center nearby? These provide wonderful resources for programs and speakers.

Check with your Parks and Recreation Department and see if you can link up with them. They then would take care of the paperwork, the advertising, the registration of children and the collection of fees! Club members teach and assist each class.

Contact the State Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) to see if they can send a speaker or program or arrange a field trip.

Contact the UConn Extension Center nearest you. Ask if they can provide you with a speaker (Master Gardener) or program.

Bethel Extension Center – 203-207-3261	Norwich	860-887-1608
Brooklyn 860-774-9600	West Hartford	860-570-9010
Haddam 860-345-4511	Vernon	860-875-3331
North Haven 203-407-3167		

Having a club flower show (big or small) in the near future? Get the kids involved by doing the old ‘avocado with toothpicks’ standard and have the results entered in your show. Remember, your youth group must be registered with the Federated Garden Club to be able to participate in major shows. Contact the State Chairman: Susan Senning, 41 River Road, Essex, CT 06426. (860) 388-7667 or email susansenning@yahoo.com.

Funding: Most clubs have a Youth Activities budget. Some come under the heading of Civic Development. Other clubs charge a small fee for their Junior Members, or hold fundraisers (plant sales, boutiques, sale of T-shirts, seedling sale, garden tours, note card sales). Even others are lucky enough to receive grants.

Clubs report they are involved in:

From The Branford Garden Club – planted bare rooted trees using the Wildlife Packet from the CT Forestry Division.

This year they had 196 entries into the Federation’s Poetry and Poster Contest with nine state winners that went on to the New England Regional competition.

They updated and identified the plants and trees at a school’s Nature Trail along with planting 100 daffodils in the area.

Field trips to town Land Trust areas to identify flora and fauna.

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From The Garden Club of Brookfield – with a girl scout group established a “Secret Garden” at a school. They prepared the beds and planted bulbs in the fall and annuals in the spring.

From the Cheshire Garden Club – A year long project:

January, February and March - spent planning the garden. Talked about the area to be planted and picking appropriate plants for the area (i.e., sun, shade, rain, soil needs, etc) (send in a soil sample to UConn). Designed the garden and drew up a plan,

April – outlined the garden and dug and amended soil

May – planted!!! Perennials and annuals. Added a walkway to get into the garden.

June – put in a bench and tended garden.

July and August – garden was maintained and watered by club members. Plants were added as needed.

September and October – edged the garden and planted spring blooming bulbs

November – made pine cone birdseed feeders (younger and special ed. children) Each child was given large print pictures of the types of birds that their feeders would attract, so they could compare them to the actual birds seen at home.

Their special ed kids decorated clay pots and arranged flowers in them for Valentine’s Day presents for their parents.

From The Mystic Garden Club - Over 500 students participated in an Arbor Day planting with teachers and students reading poems and singing songs. The Principals of the two schools involved spoke on the importance of Arbor Day.

From The Enfield Garden Club – planted terrariums

From The Glastonbury Garden Club – they toured a Great Harvest Bakery and learned about whole grains and good health. They also got to make their own bread! Built bluebird nesting boxes and monitor for the DEP program. They started and maintain a garden at the police station.

From The North Stonington Garden Club - held a moss workshop with a whole first grade. 61 Children with trowels and shovels filled wheelbarrows and wagons with different kinds of moss, interesting sticks and rocks. They then listened to Sue Sposato – the “Moss Lady” who showed them how to make a tray garden. Each child made one and took it home!

In the fall they took kids on a nature walk and collected plants for pressing.

SNET donated old phone books and delivered them to the school for this project.

Club members returned to help the kids create projects with their pressed materials.

From The Garden Club of Old Greenwich – Children planted daffodil bulbs donated by the Daffodil Society and Green and Clean. In the spring the students cut some and participated in a Daffodil Show at a local church.

The story Tops and Bottoms was read and root vegetables planted in containers so that their tops and bottoms could be seen and watched as they grew.

From The Simsbury Garden Club – sponsor a pumpkin painting workshop. They are decorated with acrylic paint, pompoms, pipe cleaners and construction paper. Decorate small grapevine wreaths with dried material provided by Club members (or take a walk with the kids in November and pick your own!). They found the kids like to spray paint the material in bright colors. Have a bird feeder workshop with pre-cut parts and an instruction sheet on how to feed the birds. The kids loved putting them together and decorating them with permanent marking pens. (Find someone with a few carpentry skills to cut the parts!)

From The Southbury Garden Club – sponsor a Sunflower growing contest. Prize given in September for the largest. All participants receive a prize.

From The Suffield Garden Club – The first meeting of the year (in their case, October) they explain what their club is about – plants, birds, insects, environment and conservation. They teach the children about bulbs and plant some in a school yard and give some to take home to plant. In February they plant a wheat grass centerpiece that the kids can mow/cut creatively and take home. Discuss Hazardous Waste Day (find out when it is for your town and plan accordingly). They took a field trip to Rainbow Dam and Fishway in Windsor Locks and learned about restocking the waterways of CT with salmon and fish ladders. Were given a tour by a state biologist (career path?).

From The West Hartford Garden Club – They split lima beans that had been soaked in water and found the new plant, food and covering in a lesson about seeds. They then drew and labeled the seed parts. The seeds were put in a water glass which was lined with green construction paper (between the glass and the paper), an inch of water was put in the bottom and they were placed in a sunny window and watched daily for growth. The kids learned how to grow plants from cuttings. Begonias and Christmas cactus were put in small pots and brought home for care. They, too, did grape vine wreathes, which they made themselves!

Note: Visit the National Gardening Association's kids gardening web site at www.kidsgardening.com (www.garden.org) for more info.

Questions? Need more info? Have more ideas? Please contact me!
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