

Activity 35:

A La Carfe Garden



Objective: Design a habitat garden and select plant material to attract various types of wildlife



Time: Variable, depending on your garden design and the number of participants



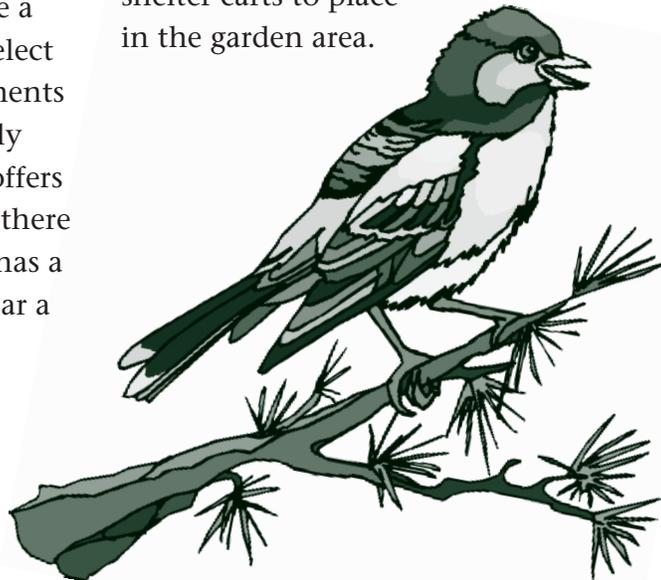
Materials: Plants, shovels, mulch, water for plants



NOTE: This activity is complimented by P.L.A.N.T. and Wildlife Needs on page 2, which helps select the location of the site.

Do your young gardeners like the idea of having birds and butterflies flying through the garden? How about regular visits from a big toad or brightly-colored lizards? Listed on the following pages are several types of wildlife your group may want to attract. The group can add to an existing garden area or work to create a new space. As your group works to select a site, note that many of the components of a habitat may be maximized simply by choosing a location that already offers some of these features. For example, there already may be an area near by that has a cedar tree or that has a moist area near a water spigot.

Have the JMgers study the future habitat site and complete the “Before” section of the *Before and After* page following this activity. Have your students vote to select the wildlife they would like to see in their garden. The group can then choose at least one item from the food, water, and shelter carts to place in the garden area.



Once a garden site is decided on, guide the gardeners to discuss the following questions:

1. How they will obtain the materials?
2. Where to place items?
3. When they will plant?
4. How the area will be maintained?
5. How they will get permission?

obtaining Materials

Materials for the habitat may need to be purchased or donated. Many items on the lists may be available through students bringing items from home, such as a garbage can lid for a water source or bag of leaves to create leaf litter. Make sure they ask their parent or guardian for permission to donate the item to the garden.

For other items, such as small trees, bird feeders, etc., consider having students practice their persuasive writing skills by asking local businesses for support in helping your JMG group create a habitat garden. Students should include in their letters who they are, what they want to do, why they want to do it, and how that business can help. Fundraising efforts asking each business to make a small donation to fund a specific plant or other item can be very successful. Call the local county Extension agent to confirm if a listed tree or other plant can do well in your area.

Where to Place Items (Make a Garden Wall Map!)

Once all materials have been decided on, list them on the chalkboard or poster. Include in that list existing components such as trees, shrubs, rocks, etc. First, have students measure the length of the boundaries of the site of your A la Carte Garden. On an open wall, begin your Garden Wall Map by using masking tape to establish the boundaries of the area that will serve at the garden habitat site. Designate a scale for your map. (Depending on the size of the wall space available, it could be 1 yard of A la Carte Garden = 1 foot on wall map). Next assign a specific item(s) that each child should add to the map. The group should make the symbols using different colors of construction paper. Help students estimate the actual size of the item and then create it to the same scale. Label each symbol and place a loop of masking tape on the back to stick it to the map.

First tape the existing component symbols to an open wall. Discuss where the group thinks each item could be located in the garden as you have students place the new symbols on the map. Once the placement of these items has been discussed and consensus is reached, be sure to have students make a sketch of the garden area.

When to Plant

Set a habitat construction date on which your JMG group plans to have available all the materials that have been brought from home or donated. Place the gardeners into small groups of 2-3 and put them in charge of planting and placing a specific item being brought in to the area. If the area is a larger size, requires additional help to till, to remove areas of sod, or to move in larger amounts of soil, elicit the support of parents and volunteers. This is a great way to establish support and ownership of the project among a larger group! See *Planning a Garden Work Day* (page 187).

Maintaining the Area

If adequate rainfall is not available, regular watering of the new plantings may be necessary.

Use the *Schedule It* activity (page 12) to assign specific students certain dates that they will be responsible for watering, weeding and fertilizing.

Getting Permission

If your group decides to plant on school grounds or any public area, you need to

first obtain permission. Before seeking approval for a project like this, it is best to have all of the above questions thought through and answered.

After the area has had several weeks to gradually become established, have students study the area regularly to check for any signs of wildlife living in or visiting the site. After the habitat area has been in place for four to six weeks, have the JMgers compare the garden site before and after the building of their garden. Use the *A la Carte Garden: Before and After* worksheet.



A Garden Wall Map is a kid-friendly way to involve the whole group in creating a plan for the area while providing a better understanding of the importance of mapping items to scale.