

How to create a sensory garden ...

Why is Sensory Play important?

Sensory play engages children, helping them explore and discover the world - and using their senses through sensory play is recognised as an integral part in their development. Sensory Play includes any activity that will stimulate any one or all of a child's five senses.

All children need help learning how to use their senses. Some children will experience greater and more specific difficulties in making sense of all the different sensations - and how to react to them. A child with Special Educational Needs, whose ability to learn through their senses might be affected, will need extra help to do this. That is why Sensory Play is so important for them and has many benefits:

- aids children in engaging with their peers
- encourages children to develop motor skills to carry out everyday tasks
- helps to develop cognitive skills
- helps to develop speech and language
- helps to learn sensory features and how to react e.g. is something hot or too cold?
- calming

Creating a Sensory Garden



A sensory garden is designed to stimulate the senses and is a wonderful way for children to explore and improve their sensory development and learn about the environment around them. It is also a healthy place of discovery and gets children outdoors.

Gardening is a great way to familiarise children with different textures, sights and smells. It doesn't matter how small your outdoor space is – one of our @garden4me raised planters can easily fit into that empty, long forgotten dingy corner that nobody uses - and you can add more planters as space and budgets permit. Many of the issues faced by children with Special Educational Needs can be accommodated if your planter can offer a range of sensory experiences in a creative and imaginative way.

Sight – our planters come in three bright colours that are attractive to children – and with the right plants they can offer colour and shapes throughout the seasons. Include flowers, leaves, berries, and grasses in your planter to create interest throughout the year. Sunflowers have bright and bold flowers and some can grow up to 30 cm in a week. Heuchera are useful additions and come in many vibrant colours from lime green to red and dark purple.

Smell - there are so many plants that have distinctive and interesting smells – honeysuckle will fill the air and lemon scented geranium has crinkly leaves that smell of lemon when rubbed. A herb garden will offer a medley of scents and textures – try lavender, rosemary, thyme, chives and mint to get started.

Touch - a sensory garden can be full of different textures - when children explore with their hands they get to appreciate the real nature of things. Choose plants with interesting textures - for example lamb's ear which feels woolly and soft to the touch - and silver sage with large, silvery-white leaves covered in cotton wool like down. Indeed the process of handling the compost itself can provide a therapeutic and calming experience.



Taste - engage the children in growing fruit and vegetables in your raised planter. Strawberries are really easy and quick to grow - and they taste delicious. It will also help children understand the importance of healthy eating particularly as child obesity is a

current problem. There's nothing better than picking and eating vegetables and fruit which you have grown yourself – try starting with carrots, radishes, lettuces and tomatoes - all easy to grow in your planter.

Sound – sound is another fun feature of a sensory garden, and can be key to creating a calming environment. Bamboo and ornamental grasses create unique sounds, and the rustling of leaves is also soothing. Wind chimes and windmills can be easily added to your planter and the beautiful sounds will entice children to gather around to listen.

