



**When Reality ends, Imagination begins.**  
**Designing for Creativity and Wellbeing in an Artistic Paradise School Paradise School Garden - A Framework for Success**

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<https://www.biomebioyou.eu/education-sustainable-development.html>

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It's time to plan and design our Paradise School Garden! Here's a very important tip:  
Plan big, but start small.

A large project initially may be overwhelming and exhaust the enthusiasm of the pupils and team. Let them get excited about the success of a colourful, enjoyable, small Paradise School Garden; then expand as confidence and experience increases and space and time allow. KISS. Keep it Simple and STEADY.

### ***OUTDOOR PARADISE SCHOOL GARDEN DESIGN***

There are many different Paradise School Garden design options, depending on the space you have available, the goals for your Paradise School Garden programme, and the amount of time and labour that can be devoted to the programme.

The **pupils' voices** are crucial to every phase of the design process. For them to feel a **sense of ownership of the Paradise School Garden**, their ideas must guide the overall project. If we tell students, "Here is where we're going to have a vegetable, a herb, a forest, a play-area in the garden, what is left for them to envision? If we ask students, "What kinds of outdoor Garden spaces would help you learn more about yourself, your friends, vegetables, fruits, insects, etc., etc., we have presented a whole different level of interaction and involvement. Now students must investigate what kinds of food plants they can grow in their gardens, what environmental conditions those plants need to grow, what connections those foods then have to their diets, and so on. We don't need sophisticated designs to build a successful Paradise School Garden, but creating a physical plan helps us to organize our plans and communicate our to-do list. Just don't cast the plans and design in stone and let's remain open and flexible to spontaneous, creative and artistic suggestions from our young gardeners and designers and dreamers.

### **ENVISIONING**

School Gardens can encompass everything from beds of vegetables and fruit plants to sensory areas in the School Gardens for touching and smelling, from flower and herb gardens to nurture pollinators, native plants to feed birds and butterflies, or sustainable rain collectors to help protect our environment to areas for wellbeing, literacy development or just magical spaces. Indeed, school Gardens might include seating areas, outdoor

classrooms, or areas for creative play and exploration. Begin with **visioning** exercises with everyone involved in the Paradise School Garden project. Finding out how teachers will use the Garden, how students will actively participate, and how the community will be, if you choose so, to be welcomed and involved. This can help you set the goals and mission of the project.

You may choose to conduct visioning sessions in individual classrooms or in the school hall, or indeed online through a dedicated questionnaire. A facilitator should lead the session and keep a running list of everyone's ideas.

No School Garden should be developed without active participation from as many students as possible. You can certainly establish boundaries from the outset, but leave as many of the details as possible for the pupils to define. There are several websites and indeed the INTO, IN-Touch magazine has a monthly article on gardens, etc. The bottom line is that no matter how well you plan and how beautiful a place you create, if the Paradise School Garden is not pupil-generated, then it will lack ownership. Sustainability requires dedication and ownership. If the Paradise School Garden is to be used, respected and cared for, then these are key to success.

Be sure to invite teachers, parents, and the whole-school community to brainstorm ideas also. Teachers might want space for an outdoor classroom or various beds to use for experiments. Parents might ask that part of the Paradise School Garden be devoted to use by very small pupils. The ideas people generate will fall into different levels of detail; cultivate a planning committee that is willing to take the ideas and develop an overall description and design.

### ***SITE ANALYSIS***

Next investigate the neighbourhood context and features of the intended Paradise School Garden site. The formal process of assessing these issues is called **site analysis**, and will help determine where the actual Paradise School Garden will be located within the school and what physical constraints it will face. It's best if students can be involved in helping determine the location, but if there is only one available space, at least have them assess the space to develop a base map. This is simply a drawing that shows how big the space is and where existing features are located.

#### ***To Do...***

1. Inventory Existing Features
2. Start by sketching your Paradise School Garden space from a bird's eye view by outlining the property lines and all of the existing features (e.g., shrubs, sidewalks, fences) on a piece of blank paper. Organizing students into teams to investigate certain parameters like size, soil type and drainage, light exposure, etc. Have the teams develop maps of their research, all using the same template. This will help students visualize the scale as they draw.
3. Use a large tape measure to take accurate measurements of the site perimeter and each existing feature noted on your sketch. Record the information in the appropriate places on the site sketch.
4. Note the location of and distance to a water source.
5. Plot the location of existing plant materials and landscape beds. Identify and label the existing plants and make note of their approximate size (height and width).

6. Locate features you may not be able to see, including underground electricity, pond, and water pipes etc. Contact school maintenance staff or utility companies for assistance. Ask the caretaker if you have one?
7. Summarize Garden Site Conditions
8. Next, take time to observe your space. Answer the following questions to get started.
9. How do people use the space now? If the proposed Paradise School Garden space is near a play area, will people run through the Paradise School Garden?
10. Does the soil appear to drain well, or is it hard and compacted? Are there signs of drainage patterns or areas of poor drainage?
11. Where is the sun? Use a compass to determine – east, west, north, and south – and note it on your sketch. Southern and western exposures typically receive the most sunlight. What path will the sun take across the Garden?
12. Are there any trees or buildings that will shade the Paradise School Garden?
13. Does the ground have any unusual dips?
14. What direction does the wind blow?
15. Are there any views you wish to block off?
16. Do you need to take measures to secure the site (e.g., with fencing)?
17. Create a Needs List.

***Carefully consider how you plan to use the outdoor garden space, and then translate that into landscaping needs.***

Here are some examples:

1. Do you plan to take large classes to the Paradise School Garden? If so, you'll need enough space for them complete their tasks, and possibly a sitting area for demonstrations or class discussions.
2. Will you plan to grow vegetables for a nutrition programme, or hope to plant a butterfly/insect, wild flower habitat?
3. Must the Paradise School Garden be wheelchair accessible? If so, plan for wide, level pathways.

## ***CREATE A DESIGN PLAN***

### **Create a Base Map**

Finally, use the information from the envisioning exercise and the site analysis to develop a conceptual Paradise School Garden design. By the time your site analysis is complete your initial sketch of the area will probably be cluttered! That's okay, because it's the 'draft' for creating a more orderly base map. Have each team transfer their drawings to tracing paper, and compile them into an overall site analysis by stacking the traced drawings. Ask students to discuss how the layers combine, and what additional information they derive from considering all the layers together rather than separately. On graph paper, use your measurements to create a correctly scaled drawing, including the property lines and existing structures and vegetation you plan to keep.

At the same time, summarize your needs list, observations, and other notes on one piece of paper for easy reference. Keep your original sketch just in case!

### **Brainstorm Using Mindmaps or Bubble Diagrams**

Once you have a base map, it's time to brainstorm. Many landscape designers brainstorm by using mindmaps or bubble diagrams. These define open spaces using roughly drawn circles and squares rather than trying to determine specific sizes for the different areas. The advantage is that you can draw bubbles quickly, experimenting with different configurations, and can use different colours for clarity. Start simply, just drawing big "bubbles" on top of the base map to show the different Paradise School Garden zones being proposed.

Another approach is to make copies of the base map and ask students to each come up with a possible design. Classes can then critique the plans and develop a final version using their favourite ideas from many plans.

### **Define Beds and Hardscapes**

Now you can take it to another level of detail. Start by defining raised or flat beds, walkways, and any other paved areas. Decide which type of bed you prefer before deciding the shape, since materials available for raised beds can potentially restrict the shape and size. Next, draw in other hardscape elements and prominent features such as sitting areas, ponds, and patios. Be sure to draw the plan to scale so that you don't run into space problems later. Although you'll need to leave room in the design for flexibility, hardscape items define the underlying structure of the Paradise School Garden and have more permanence than other features.

### **Choose the Types of Plants**

Now you can make some decisions about broad types of plant materials — in an edible Paradise School Garden, vegetables, fruits, and herbs; in a landscape setting, native shrubs, trees, perennials and annuals. At this stage you don't have to know the specific plants you'll grow, just the characteristics of plants you are looking for in terms of size, shape, growth habit, season of harvest, and so on. For example, maybe one bed is near an entrance and you want to plant something that blooms for everyone to enjoy. Perhaps the sunniest bed is destined for vegetables, and the sitting area needs a shade tree. You'll choose specific plants in the next step!

### ***Identify Your Plant List***

Choose plants that can grow successfully in your soil and school, that you can easily maintain, and that are blooming, growing, and fruiting at a time when students are in school if possible. Consult your Summary of Site Conditions for the space, light, and soil available on the site, and find plants with matching requirements. Use books and the Internet to find this information, or seek advice from local garden centres and experts.

### ***CREATE A CONSTRUCTION PLAN***

The next phase is to look critically at the design and determine how it can be constructed. If the soil or drainage is poor, you may have to build raised beds to grow food plants. If paths are desired, will less expensive mulch suffice, or is it worth the investment to use gravel or flagstone? Find out if there are parents with design or construction experience who are

willing to volunteer. But don't worry if there aren't such resources - you'll be amazed at what students can do! Recycled materials are great!!

To determine construction methods, look at landscaping books and magazines to see how others have built various features. Once the design and the construction approach are determined, you can start to calculate the kind and quantity of materials needed. A local landscape company or garden centre/nursery may be happy to help with this for little or no cost for the sake of community involvement. You then can start the process of fundraising, if necessary, to build the Paradise School Garden.

While it's good to plan comprehensively for the whole Paradise School Garden, it's generally best to start implementation with one area. Create the habitat zone or the food production area the first season, and meanwhile build support for other zones. However, if students have worked hard on planning, be sure to do at least some construction during that school year as a reward. They need to see at least some of the vision come to life, and everyone should have the benefit of putting at least one plant in the ground. Team, team , team.

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Again <https://www.biomebioyou.eu/education-sustainable-development.html> has so much to offer in lessons, ideas, practical projects etc., etc, for you Paradise School Garden.

And.....have fun as there is No Planet B and our Paradise Garden is Positive Climate Action.

More great Ideas at <https://kidsgardening.org/>

PS Look at Youtube for Ideas of School garden Designs.

There are Free Apps for Garden Design also to integrate with your STEAM initiatives.

### Paradise Gardens :

View from the teachers-

<https://live.securebroadcast.com/video/NIV03C2QZ68H7MA>

View from the pupils-

<https://live.securebroadcast.com/video/4X9MAW2EMM6SIY8>

Garden Design Apps

<https://kidsgardening.org/designing-a-school-garden/>

<https://www.houseandgarden.co.uk/article/garden-design-apps>

[https://download.cnet.com/Garden-Planner/3000-18499\\_4-10285889.html](https://download.cnet.com/Garden-Planner/3000-18499_4-10285889.html)

### Best free landscape design software

1. SketchUp Free. Product Name: SketchUp. ...
2. PRO Landscape Home. Product Name: PRO Landscape. ...
3. Kerkythea. Product Name: Solid Iris Kerkythea. ...
4. Showoff.com the Visualizer. Product Name: The Visualizer. ...
5. Lands Design. Product Name: Lands Design. ...
6. Arborgold. ...

7. Plan-a-Garden. ...
8. Garden Planner.

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8. Garden Planner
9. iScape App
10. DreamPlan
11. Marshalls Garden Visualizer
12. Terragen
13. Designor Buddy



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