

# Gardening

## Aims

- To improve communication skills through work planning
- To design or create a small garden or feature for the workplace

**Objectives** – At the end of the session participants will be able to

- Discuss gardening tasks and agree on task distribution
- Work effectively as a team
- Use measuring skills
- Convert from imperial to metric measurements

### Tip

The area of any rectangle can be worked out by length x width.

## You will need

Squared paper and drawing tools

Measuring equipment

Imperial to Metric conversion table

Access to IT and the Internet

A space in the workplace to create a garden or feature (Unused ground or planters)

Gardening tools

Plants

## Working in partnership

If you don't know anything about gardening, try pulling in some help. Your local college may have someone who could come and help. Perhaps one of your employees is a keen gardener. You may find a local garden centre might be able to offer help, or discounts, if they can get some publicity out of your event.

## Inspiration

Start the session by looking at images of gardens or planters and discussing what would be suitable for your workplace. You could use the Internet or gardening magazines for ideas. If you have PowerPoint you could make a slide show of garden images. It might be useful to borrow gardening books from your local library as this may encourage your staff to use it themselves. Some workplaces have set up a book swap or internal library for people to exchange books. You could do some soil tests to work out acidity and decide whether your garden is in the shade or the sun. Try drawing charts to record your results.

## Measuring

Keep this light-hearted! Measuring our bodies helps break the ice and ensures everyone gets to know how to use the equipment. Don't assume your participants know how to use a tape measure. Show how to measure straight lines and curves and get them joining in. Once people seem comfortable with the equipment then you can move on to measuring for your garden.

- If you have a small patch of land, measure this and use graph paper to make a scale drawing showing both **perimeter** and **area**. Do this in pairs or teams then they can help each other out.
- If you are using planters then you will need to work out area and then **volume** (for compost). Draw a scale drawing of the planter surface for the design.

**Tip**

Use square or cube-shaped planters as the volume is easier to work out! The volume is:  
Length x width x height

**Imperial and Metric**

Imperial measurements are still useful as they are all approximately based on the human body. An inch is the top part of a thumb; a foot is the distance from the tip of your finger to your elbow and yard is the distance from your nose to your finger when your arm is outstretched. The drawback of course is that all our bodies are different sizes. You can ask participants to measure

these distances in imperial and see how close they are to an inch, foot or yard. If you make a record of their measurements (perhaps by enlarging a picture of the human body) you can also use this to make notes on how these convert to metric measurements. For example one inch is roughly two and a half centimetres - so one centimetre is less than half of an inch. Don't overwhelm people by asking them to remember too many conversions, but do have a conversion chart handy. (If you use the Internet always find a UK site!) Also be aware that some conversions involve understanding of decimals and some people really struggle with this, so keep things simple at this stage.

**Tip**

1 cm<sup>3</sup> is the same volume as 1 ml.  
This will help when buying compost!

**Garden design**

Use the scale drawing to begin planning for your garden. You can use your library books and resources to look up plants or try the Internet. The BBC How to Be A Gardener site [www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/htbg](http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/htbg) is excellent for finding out which plants would suit your soil and what colour

schemes you could use. Work in pairs or individually to draw and colour in a scale drawing for your garden space. If you are using planters, you can do the same on a smaller scale.

**Budget**

As a group you need to agree on a final design and then decide which plants to buy. You can often do this by accessing your local garden centre on line. Create a budget sheet to work out how much money you have to spend on plants and other features, and then agree on the plants you will buy.

**Tip**

The **perimeter** of a shape is the distance all the way round its edges. You will need to know this if you want to buy fence panels!

**Work plan**

Complete a work plan for the garden showing the tasks to be done and who will do them by when.

**What's in it for me?**

- Your Staff

Improved numeracy skills and confidence

Time away from the usual work environment for team building

Creation of a staff space to make break times more pleasant

- Your organisation

A space for staff to take a short break from concentrating is very important in some occupations; concentration will be improved for machine or repetitive workers and those using VDU's should take breaks hourly

A garden also improves the appearance of your organisation for visiting clients or customers

A team project like this should also hopefully increase motivation and develop team working especially if you include people from different departments and levels of the organisation.

### **The next step**

If you have limited resources, you can deliver this as a garden planning exercise - but if you can find a space and funding to do some practical gardening there will be more of an incentive for people to get involved and turn the Learning at Work event into an ongoing garden project. Link with your local college to offer information on floristry, horticulture and garden design courses as well as literacy and numeracy help. You could arrange a visit to a local Royal Horticultural Society garden [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk).

### **Linked resources**

The Level 1 Skills for Life material (L1 Numeracy Unit 4) has a section on maths and gardening that could help.

BBC Skillswise has some handy tips on measuring including volume, area and perimeter [www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise](http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise).