

Garden Plots

Activity

Resource:

Beyond the Walls: Activities for the Outdoors

Grade(s): 7 8

Division(s): Intermediate

Setting: Curricular

Season: Spring

Activity Goal

Participants utilize sending and receiving skills and net/wall strategies to send a ball into an opponent's quadrant while defending their own area and thinking creatively about healthy eating and environmental stewardship.

For participant safety, please review the contents of the [Beyond the Walls: Safety Considerations](#) page for information on Safety Standards, Spring Safety Considerations, and Outdoor Playing Areas and Surfaces.

Equipment

- 9 cones/pylons per group (or a 4 square playing area)
- 1 playground rubber ball per group

Before Play

- Review the safety rules and activity instructions with participants prior to the activity.

- Establish the boundaries for the designated playing area and share them with participants.
- Divide participants into groups of 4. Using cones/pylons in the following manner, each group of 4 sets up their playing area by creating a large square, then dividing the large square into four quadrants, and marking the halfway point on each outside edge. Put the last cone/pylon in the centre of their playing area so each participant has their own square 'plot' in the group 'garden'. Alternately, use a 4-square playing area in the playground if available.
- Discuss the concept of planting a garden, and the care that is required to maintain it. Encourage participants to share their knowledge of gardens, inviting them to share what they know about gardens, why people might grow gardens, types of food seeds or plants that might be planted in the spring so that it can be harvested later in the summer or fall. Encourage discussion about invasive species, and how they can impact the growth of a garden, or other local ecosystems (e.g., weeds, Purple Loosestrife, English Ivy, hornworm, aphids, moths).
- Explain that the object of the game is for the participants to send their invasive species (the ball) into one of the other three gardens (the other quadrants) and prevent an invasive species (ball) from landing in their garden (quadrant).
- Co-create success criteria for how participants should 'send' the ball out of their garden plot based on conditions of the terrain, available space, and participant skill (e.g., catch and underhand toss, keep ball airborne by striking with open palm, allowing one bounce prior to hitting with closed fist).

During Play

- Instruct participants to envision the ball in this game as a garden pest, a weed, or an invasive species. Each time it enters their 'plot', they must get it out of their plot as quickly as possible to ensure the growth of their 'garden' (i.e., so they can score points).
- If the ball hits the ground in a participant's garden plot, the participant who sent the ball earns a point.
- Continue play, having participants rotate in a clockwise direction after each point is scored.

After Play

Use the following prompts for participants to reflect on ways to be active in spring and engage others in activity to build a habit of engaging in outdoor activity throughout the year.

Question prompts:

- How did the various positions within the garden alter how you played? Did the plot you were in impact your strategy (e.g., the terrain of your plot, wind direction, sun direction)? If so, how?
- How did you experiment with different ways to send the ball out of your garden plot? What made sending the object easier? What made it more challenging?
- How would you alter this activity to make it even more fun?

Adaptations

Consider these tips to maximize the challenge and the fun for participants.

- To encourage participants to connect this game to concepts associated with gardening (i.e., different plants need different things, such as light and nutrients, and rely on each other in delicate balance), consider allowing different rules for striking and scoring in each 'plot' of the garden (e.g., one plot scores two points rather than one, one plot in which you can only strike with closed fist, one plot allows catching and throwing rather than a one touch rule).
- Consider using a time limit and the garden will be considered a success if they keep all of the invasive species out of their garden when the time has elapsed.
- Consider adding more than one ball to the play, or a variety of different sizes of balls to alter the speed and challenge of play.
- Consider including an implement for participants to attempt to send the ball, or other object (e.g., badminton shuttlecock, balloon, wiffle ball).

Modifications

Consider these tips to maximize inclusion and fun for all participants.

- For participants with physical limitations and disabilities, consider allowing participant to send the ball to other plots using any body part rather than just an arm.
- For participants with intellectual disabilities, consider using a balloon or a larger ball to slow down the speed of play.