

## OVERVIEW

Taking care of the environment is everyone's responsibility. This lesson gives students an opportunity to learn about their local ecosystems. By learning about the variety of plants that grow in the community and creating their own mini ecosystem, students take responsibility for plotting, planting, and nurturing their own garden. Sharing responsibilities for the garden teaches cooperation and builds knowledge about their local area as well as the global environment.

## MATERIALS

- ▣ Butcher paper
- ▣ Compasses, pencils, and mapping tools
- ▣ Seedlings
- ▣ Paper and pens
- ▣ Long, narrow tubes to nurture the seedlings
- 🌀 Plant Labels
- ▣ Newspaper and bark chips to make mulch
- ▣ Gardening tools
- ▣ Camera
- 🌀 Diary Pages
- 🌀 Research Sheet

**C**haracter is the way you really are. It's the way you act when no one is looking. Good people do good deeds not for show, credit, or adulation but to express their true self. These people have good character.

Most people say they want to be good, but developing good character takes more than words. Good people are people of action – they take care of themselves and others. They can be depended upon to do the right thing, even when the right thing is hard to do.

You can help your family, teachers, neighbors, and friends by trying your hardest and doing your best in everything you do.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will learn responsibility by:

- ▣ Plotting a map of their school/local area to build a garden
- ▣ Researching local tree, shrub, and grass varieties
- ▣ Investigating why those plants are important to the ecosystem
- ▣ Learning about their environmental responsibilities
- ▣ Sharing responsibilities for the care of the garden

## ACTIVITY

1. Write the word RESPONSIBLE on the board. Ask the students if they know what it means.
2. Brainstorm different responsibilities the students have. Make three lists on the board and divide the responsibilities into the following categories:

Home	School	Community
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3. After discussing the different responsibilities with the class, tell them an important one everyone shares is an obligation to the environment.
4. Write the word ECOSYSTEM on the board and explain the meaning of the word.
5. Confirm understanding by showing the class a picture of an ecosystem. Point out that each element in the ecosystem depends on the others. If one is removed, the ecosystem is out of balance.
6. Ask the class to offer other examples of ecosystems if appropriate.
7. Explain that they will make their own ecosystem and take responsibility for maintaining it.
8. Show them a photograph of the area where they will plant their garden. Tell the students they will learn about the different plants and animals that can be sustained in their ecosystem. Using the camera and the diary, they will monitor the development of the ecosystem.
9. Divide the class into teams of four or five. Tell them each group is responsible for learning about one plant, animal, or insect found locally and that will be part of the ecosystem.
10. Distribute the pictures and names of the plant, animal, or insect to each group.
11. Tell them each team member has an individual responsibility to complete the research. Distribute the Research Sheet, making sure the appropriate task is given to each student. (It's important that students are given responsibilities that aren't too challenging for them so they can build their levels of confidence).
12. Give the teams a developmentally appropriate amount of time to research their element.
13. When the research is complete, begin mapping the area in which the garden will be grown.
14. In the next session, provide the teams with the equipment and materials they will need to plant the garden. The equipment required will depend on the space chosen, but each team should participate in clearing space for the garden, digging over the ground to be planted, and planting and marking their seeds.

## FOLLOW-UP IDEAS

- Prepare simple, fun meals to emphasize responsibility. Milk shakes, ice cream, or soup are good possibilities for cooperative efforts.
- Divide the children into teams of four or five. When you announce a letter of the alphabet, let each team arrange itself on the floor in the shape of the letter, using every team member. Discuss responsibility by asking, "What would we have had if (one of the students) weren't in place?" Repeat the activity and praise everyone for doing his or her part to make the letters. If you have enough children, let them work as one big team to arrange themselves into simple words, such as: "do," "best," "good," "finish," "action," "words," "control," "duty," "right," and "better."
- Reinforce this lesson by asking parents to notice and praise responsible actions and behavior at home.
- Create a mural by letting the children draw pictures of themselves being responsible at home or at school.
- Have a poster, bumper sticker, billboard, cheer, essay, or poetry contest on the topic of responsibility.
- Encourage the students to develop their interest in growing plants by making "sack gardens" (burlap sacks filled with compost and seeds of colorful flowers) that they can plant at home using the same responsibilities they have in the classroom garden (watering, feeding, removing weeds, etc.). Have them bring their sack gardens to school and hold competitions to see which is the biggest, the brightest, or the tallest flower.

## OTHER RESPONSIBILITY ACTIVITIES

- When the garden has been planted, monitor growth at regular intervals. Maintain it according to the responsibilities of the teams. Photograph the growth.
- Monitor the emergence of animals and insects in the garden.
- Publish the results in the school newspaper or make posters to display around the school to educate peer-groups about the great job the class is doing to take responsibility for caring for the environment.
- If possible, expand the project to allow other classes to participate. Consider bringing in local community groups to take part.
- If you have enough space, encourage locals to plant seeds in the garden, too!

# RESPONSIBILITY

## LINKS TO USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://www97.intel.com/en/ProjectDesign/UnitPlanIndex/GradeIndex/#2>

Lessons that integrate technology and character education. A wide variety of topics to choose from to help students develop critical thinking skills.

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0218e/a0218e00.htm>

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has published a complete guide to setting up and running a school garden. The perfect resource for this lesson plan – downloadable and free.

[http://www.seedsavers.net/publications/1187091548\\_6844.jsp](http://www.seedsavers.net/publications/1187091548_6844.jsp)

Another free downloadable resource to help maintain a school garden – this time growing food!

<http://charactercounts.org/>

Visit our website for free teaching resources, lesson plans, ideas, and much more to help you incorporate character education into your classroom and school.



## STANDARDS

### SCIENCE

Standard 6

Understands relationships among organisms and their physical environment.

### LEVEL I [Grades K-2]

Benchmark 2

Knows that living things are found almost everywhere in the world and that distinct environments support the life of different types of plants and animals

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## VOCABULARY TERMS

ecosystem  
environment  
responsibility

biodegradable  
habitat  
plants

shared  
responsibility  
growing

[illegible]

## RESEARCH SHEET

GROUP NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

RESEARCH ELEMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

PLANT ☐ANIMAL ☐INSECT ☐

Where is it from originally?

What species/family does it belong to?

How does it fit in the ecosystem?

How does it breed?

What are the benefits or drawbacks of the element?

How can it be encouraged/discouraged in the garden?

Divide the research among the group. Everyone must take responsibility to learn about the element and be able to identify it in the garden.

## PLANT LABELS

Write the names of the plants you are growing in the garden on these labels, cut them out and laminate them. Place the markers next to the seeds/seedling you plant so you remember where everything is.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_