



Vocabulary

- Archive
- Caption
- Civic engagement
- Digital humanities
- Digital archive
- Exhibit
- Garden
- Historian
- Horticulture
- Interview
- Landscape
- Online audience
- Oral history
- Recording
- Synthesize
- Transcribe

Recommended Grade Level: 6-12

National Standards Alignment: *see page 3

Challenge Goals:

Students will...

- learn how to conduct background research using primary and secondary sources.
- refine presentation skills by conveying their interviews and findings to their class.
- collaborate with their peers.
- practice hands-on technical skills, such as audio and video recording and editing.
- investigate the role gardens play in local and personal history, cultural traditions, and community building.
- construct clear and informed questions for conducting an oral history interview.
- develop interpersonal skills by interviewing family and community members.
- synthesize the information in their interview, along with any multimedia, into a clear and persuasive written narrative.
- share their story with the Smithsonian Gardens [Community of Gardens](http://www.communityofgardens.si.edu) digital archive.

Understanding(s):

- Conducting an oral history interview with a gardener captures an in-depth personal account that can provide unique insights into a larger story about community history, cultural traditions, and environmental issues.

Essential Question(s):

- What can gardeners tell us about history, traditions, culture, and environmental issues in our communities?
- Why is it important to document and share stories about gardens and green spaces?
- Is the green space in our communities undergoing any changes today?

What you'll need: Students will ideally have access to a device to record audio and take photographs and/or video, such as a smartphone or tablet. If this equipment is not available, students can record their oral history with pen and paper. See the "Teacher's Toolshed" at the end of this document for online resources and technical specifications for images, audio, and video.

Interview Consent: In order for a teacher to submit a student's garden story to the Community of Gardens archive, the student's parent or legal guardian must sign the parent/guardian consent form. Interviewees must also sign the interviewee consent form to give their permission for their story to be submitted to Community of Gardens. Teachers should retain both sets of these consent forms for their own records; they do not need to be submitted to Smithsonian Gardens (see the "Teacher's Toolshed" at the end of this document). To respect the privacy of students and interviewees, publishing interviews to the Community of Gardens archive should not be the only measure of academic assessment. Student or interviewees may request to keep their interviews private.



Introduction to the Challenge:

This is a project about sharing wisdom, life experiences, and community history from a gardener's point of view. It is also an opportunity for students to engage in real-world fieldwork. Our lives are local, and investigating local stories and local voices can help students explore how they are part of a community, learn more about where they live from fellow citizens, and learn where they can do good in their own community. Storytelling is an act of sharing and participating in civic life.

Students can also share their projects with a national audience by contributing their garden interviews and stories online to the Smithsonian Gardens Community of Gardens digital archive. By completing this step, you and your students will become **Smithsonian Gardens Green Ambassadors**, joining a network of young people helping others better understand the meaning and value of gardens and green space to American life—today and in the future!

The interviews, stories, and videos submitted by students may even help researchers of the future understand the value and meaning of gardens in American culture. This teacher's packet will guide students to plan, implement, and contribute stories to the Community of Gardens digital archive. Lessons in this project meet many national standards and students will have the opportunity to practice their listening, recording, writing, and analytical skills. By engaging with their own family and neighbors and the gardens around them they will have the opportunity to explore the history, culture, and environment present in their own community.



Become a **Smithsonian Gardens Green Ambassador** by completing these three steps -

- Identify, prepare, and conduct an interview with a gardener in your family or community.
- Assemble an interview, images, and other media into a narrative.
- Submit these materials to communityofgardens@si.edu so that your story can be added to the Smithsonian Gardens Community of Gardens digital archive.

This teacher's packet outlines the recommended steps towards developing a completed oral history and garden story for the Community of Gardens digital archive. At the end of this document you will also find a "Teacher's Toolshed" which features helpful resources including examples of garden stories and technical recommendations. Students can follow along by visiting the Community of Gardens Challenge page on the website. While we encourage schools and teachers to complete all steps involved in the story gathering process, teachers may choose to focus on certain individual lesson units to suit specific project needs. The lessons represent optional guidelines, not requirements, for submitting a garden story to Community of Gardens. You and your students can become Green Ambassadors without completing every step of the challenge. Looking for another challenge? Check out our "[Design a Green Space Challenge](#)" for another way to become a Smithsonian Gardens Green Ambassador with your students!

Prompt:

Stories about gardens can tell us about where we've been and where we're going. The beliefs we hold, scientific innovation, foodways, and cultural and community traditions are reflected back at us in the *why* and *how* of our gardens. From the Victory Gardens of World War II to community garden plots in cities and the tomatoes growing in our own backyards or balconies today, gardens are an expression of our social, cultural, artistic, and environmental values. How can documenting and sharing these garden stories in our own communities inspire others? Why is it important to save these stories for future generations?



21st Century Skills:

- Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and non-verbal skills.
- Communicate clearly in diverse environments and for a range of purposes.
- Conduct themselves in a respectable, professional manner.
- Demonstrate imagination and curiosity.
- Develop, implement, and communicate new ideas to others effectively.
- Effectively analyze and evaluate evidence, claims and beliefs.
- Elaborate, refine, analyze, and evaluate ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts.
- Evaluate information critically and competently.
- Go beyond basic mastery of skills and/or curriculum to explore and expand one's own learning and opportunities to gain expertise.
- Interpret information and draw conclusions based on the best analysis.
- Know when it is appropriate to listen and when to speak.
- Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes, and intentions.
- Prioritize, plan and manage work to achieve the intended result.
- Understand and utilize the most appropriate media creation tools, characteristics and conventions.
- Use a wide range of idea creation techniques (such as brainstorming).
- Use information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand.
- Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information.
- Utilize multiple media and technologies, and know how to judge their effectiveness a priori as well as assess their impact.

Common Core Standards:

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.5](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.E](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.5](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.5](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.6](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1c](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4](#)



Lesson Plans:

Lesson One: Introduction

- What is an oral history?
- Do you have a garden?
- What is your personal experience with gardens?
- What is an archive?

Read, listen, and watch Community of Gardens stories online to familiarize the students with the type of stories that can be told using Community of Gardens as a platform (see the “Teacher’s Toolshed” for examples with which to start the process). Engaging with the stories of others and their life experiences will help students understand how gardens both reflect and shape ideas about cultural heritage, community, and the environment.

After reading the stories: Did anything surprise you? What do you think we can learn about personal, community, and national history from garden stories?

Lesson Two: Identify a gardener to interview

This step can also be assigned as a take-home assignment.

The gardener can be a family member, neighbor, teacher, or other adult. They can also be a peer, with permission from the teacher and the gardener’s parents or guardians. If students have trouble identifying a gardener, contact local garden clubs and community gardens to see if any members would like to participate in an interview. Once your students have each selected a gardener to interview, have them schedule an appointment with the person to conduct the interview.

Students should do some background research so they go into the interview feeling prepared. What can they find out about the time period their interviewee grew up in? Did any major historical events take place? What was their neighborhood like ten or twenty or thirty years ago? If they emigrated from a different country, what can you learn about that country?

Dig in deeper: You may want your students to focus on a particular theme in their interviews and their interviewee choice. Here are some ideas:



- Women
- Immigration
- Sustainability and environmental practices
- Access to fresh food

Lesson Three: Develop Questions

Remember, the pre-interview preparation is as important as the interview itself! You will want to do research about your interviewee and topic(s) you would like addressed in the interview. To prepare, outline a list of questions you would like to ask, such as how they got their start gardening, what they enjoy most about their garden, and how their garden has changed over time. Students should plan on asking their interviewees at least



10-15 questions. Use the interview planning sheet in the Teacher's Toolshed to have students prepare their questions.

Tips for students as they develop their questions:

- Pick a few themes (such as growing food, childhood and family experiences, or garden design) and develop questions around those themes.
- Avoid "yes or no" questions. Questions should be open-ended and encourage the interviewee to tell stories. Questions starting with 'why,' 'how,' or 'what' are often useful in teasing out parts of a garden story.

See the sample interview questions in the "Teacher's Toolshed" for more question ideas for your students.

Lesson Four: Practice interviewing each other & using equipment

Students should pair up and practice interviewing each other, ideally using the same equipment to be used during the actual oral history interview. If students do not have interviewing experience, consider having them interview each other about a favorite holiday or hobbies. Start the interview with the following dialogue:

- My name is (*your name*). I am here with (*interviewee's name*) on (*date*) at (*place*) to interview them about gardening.

Tips for Interviewing:

- Know your interviewee! Make sure you have their name correct and have done some research.
- The interview should feel like a conversation. It is okay to skip around between questions or ask different questions.
- Sometimes the best question is "Can you tell me more?"
- If you interviewee has paused, allow them to gather their thoughts instead of rushing ahead with the next question. They might be about to say something interesting.

If you use equipment to record the practice interviews, have the students play them back. Did the equipment work properly? Is the audio or video clear and easy to hear/see?

If the students write down the answers to their interview questions, have them share their notes with their interview partner. Do their notes accurately reflect what the interviewee said? What can they do to improve their note-taking skills?

Lesson Five: The Interview

Students should find a quiet space free from ambient noise. This means they might interview the gardener indoors, and meet them at their garden at a different time to take photographs. The public library might have a quiet place to conduct an interview and provide a neutral meeting space. Wherever the interview takes place, it is important that the student's teacher or parent/garden is aware of the interview time and location.

Students should do the following during the interview:



- Test all the equipment before the interview (if it is being recorded), and make sure you have a pencil and paper to take notes, or to write down the interview if you are not recording it or if equipment fails.
- Ask your interviewee to agree to and sign the consent form (see Teacher’s Toolshed for sample form). Explain your project to them, including how the story will be used. Let the interviewee know that they can withdraw their consent at any time during or after the interview if they become uncomfortable sharing their story.
- Start the interview with the following dialogue:
 - My name is (*your name*). I am here with (*interviewee’s name*) on (*date*) at (*place*) to interview them about gardening.
- Encourage students to conduct the interview in whatever language they and their interviewee are most comfortable speaking.
- At the end of the interview students should thank their interviewee for participating and let them know when they will be in touch with any additional questions, and that they will provide them with a copy of their finished story.

Safety: If a student does not know the person they are interviewing well, have them meet at a public library or other public community space accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Lesson Six: Editing and Composing the Story

The teacher, or students, should decide on the final format of the stories. Here are some ideas to help students craft their garden story:

- Transcribe the interview into a question-and-answer format (see an example [here](#)) with an introductory paragraph.
- Write a narrative story, or profile, from the interview (see an example [here](#))
- Create a multimedia video, audio, or photo story with a written introduction (see an example [here](#)).

The students should go through all of the material they collected (written and audiovisual) and make choices about what to include in their final story. Video and audio can be edited into clips, if necessary, or threaded together to form a story. Remember to save your files (both original unedited files and edited copies) to a stable back-up source such as a flash drive.

Students should share their work with the group or use peer review to gather feedback on their story.

The final stories should include captions for all images (see “Teacher’s Toolshed” for tips).



Dig in Deeper: Have the students create physical or digital storyboards to provide a visual framework for composing their story.

Lesson Seven: Submit the Stories to Smithsonian Gardens

Students can share their projects with a national online audience by contributing their garden interviews and stories to the Smithsonian Gardens Community of Gardens digital archive. By completing this step, you and your students will become Smithsonian Gardens Green Ambassadors, joining a network of young people helping

Interview a Gardener

Green Ambassadors Challenge: Classroom Edition



Smithsonian Gardens

others better understand the meaning and value of gardens and green space to American life—today and in the future!

To celebrate the hard work that went into conducting, editing, and assembling the garden interviews, Smithsonian Gardens will send a Smithsonian Gardens Green Ambassadors Challenge sign for your classroom along with Certificates of Acknowledgement signed by the Smithsonian Gardens Director.

Submit the garden stories to communityofgardens@si.edu. Be sure to include:

- Each student's final story, including all accompanying media, clearly labeled.
- A brief description of the project and process.
- Student's first name, name of interviewee (first name, last initial) and location of the garden.

After submitting the above information, Smithsonian Gardens will contact you with any questions about the garden stories prior to posting them to the Community of Gardens digital archive. In sharing your story with Smithsonian Gardens you help ensure that your community's garden stories can be an inspiration to others looking to preserve their own local garden history. We can't wait to hear from you!



Dig in Deeper:

- Take a neighborhood walk and observe the gardens and green spaces around the school, or visit a local community garden.
- Host an event or develop an exhibit to showcase or listen to the garden stories you collected. Invite the interviewees, other students, family, friends, and neighbors.
- Write a reflection paper or presentation on the experience of planning and conducting an interview, and what you learned about gardens and personal history.
- Transcribe your audio interviews. Ask a local library or museum if the students' interviews (digital files and/or transcriptions) could become part of a local history collection. This may require a new consent form from the interviewee.



Teacher's Toolshed:

- **Sampling of Community of Gardens stories to inspire your students:**
 - Urban Garden with Honeybees (example of a transcribed audio interview in a Q & A format): <http://communityofgardens.si.edu/items/show/55>
 - An Italian-American Garden Story (example of a family history of gardening): <http://communityofgardens.si.edu/items/show/12236>
 - My Neighbor's Garden (example of a story contributed by a high school student): <http://communityofgardens.si.edu/items/show/12197>
 - Three Part Harmony Farm (example of a video interview): <http://communityofgardens.si.edu/items/show/50>
 - Shepard Street (example of an interview turned into a narrative story): <http://communityofgardens.si.edu/items/show/12258>
- **Resources for Oral History:**
 - Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide: <http://www.folklife.si.edu/the-smithsonian-folklife-and-oral-history-interviewing-guide/smithsonian>
 - Oral History in Education (Oral History Association): <http://www.oralhistory.org/education/>
 - Principle and Best Practices for Oral History (Oral History Association): <http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices/>
 - Baylor Institute for Oral History: <https://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/index.php?id=931751>
 - Library of Congress additional resources: <https://www.loc.gov/folklife/fieldwork/internetlinks.html>
https://www.loc.gov/folklife/edresources/edcenter_files/samplerelaseforms.pdf
- **Technical Recommendations:**
 - **Audio and Video:** Practice makes perfect when it comes to recording audio and video. Find a quiet place to conduct the interview; use an external microphone, if possible; and become familiar with the recording and editing software or apps you are using. You can use a good audio or video software or app to record the interview, adjust sound quality, make audio clips, and edit the interview. Save the original file in a widely used file format, such as .WMV or .AIF. Save a copy of the file as an .MP3 for editing and easy sharing.
 - **Images:** Photos can bring your interviewee and their garden to life for your audience. Show what makes this garden special—tell its story. Consider starting at the garden's entrance and take pictures as you move through it. Photograph the interviewee in their garden. If you ask the gardener to supply images of their own garden, share these tips to help them take the best photographs possible.
 - Images should be shot in the camera or device's highest setting. Keep the original high-quality files. You can save copies of the photos as smaller .JPEG files to share.
 - Ask the interviewee to share old photographs or documents that help tell their garden's story. If you scan or photograph them make sure to handle them carefully and return them promptly. Your school library or media center might have a scanner you can use.



- Remember to create a caption list that describes what each photo shows and lists the garden's location, date, photographer, and any other relevant information.

Example of an okay caption: Paths and arbor, Sue's garden, Washington, D.C., 2009.

Example of a better caption: The perennial garden and path. Arbor on the side of the house is for old-fashioned roses. Sue's garden in the Bloomingdale neighborhood, Washington, D.C., June 17, 2009.

Interview a Gardener: Interview Planning Worksheet



Smithsonian Gardens

Think of 10-15 questions to ask your interviewee. Write the questions in the space provided and bring this worksheet with you to your interview.

Tips for Developing Questions

- Pick a few themes (such as growing food, childhood and family experiences, or garden design) and develop questions around those themes.
- Avoid “yes or no” questions. Questions should be open-ended and encourage the interviewee to tell stories. Questions starting with ‘why,’ ‘how,’ or ‘what’ are often useful in teasing out parts of a garden story.

Tips for Interviewing

- Know your interviewee! Make sure you have their name correct and have done some research.
- The interview should feel like a conversation. It is okay to skip around between questions or ask different questions.
- Sometimes the best question is “Can you tell me more?”
- If your interviewee has paused, allow them to gather their thoughts instead of rushing ahead with the next question. They might be about to say something interesting.

The Interview:

If you are recording your interview, begin it with the following dialogue:

- My name is *(your name)*. I am here with *(interviewee’s name)* on *(date)* at *(place)* to interview them about gardening.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

Your Name: _____

Who are you going to interview?

When and where will you be interviewing this person?

Interview a Gardener: Interview Planning Worksheet



Smithsonian Gardens

12.

13.

14.

15.

Notes:

Interview a Gardener: Sample Interview Questions

Growing Up

- Did you have a garden growing up? What was it like?
- What are your first memories of gardening?
- What was your neighborhood or community like? Did your neighbors have gardens?
- Did your parents or older family members garden when they were children?

Learning to Garden

- Who taught you how to garden? Share a story about them.
- Where was your first garden? What did you grow?
- Did you make any mistakes while learning?
- What was your first gardening “success”?
- What advice would you give to a new gardener?

Your Garden

- When did you plant your current garden?
- How has the garden changed since you first started it?
- Where do you spend most of your time in your garden?
- What do you enjoy most about your garden?
- What are your future plans for your garden?

Planting and Growing

- Where do you buy or find your seeds and plants?
- How do you decide what you are going to grow?
- Do you have a favorite plant or vegetable in your garden? Why?
- What is the hardest plant you’ve ever tried to grow?
- Do you have favorite tricks or tips you have picked up along the way?

Heritage and Immigration

- Did you grow up in a different country? What gardening traditions have you brought with you?
- Have you learned anything new about gardening in the United States?
- Have you shared garden wisdom or tips from your home country with friends and neighbors here?
- Do you have a family or traditional recipe you like to prepare with ingredients from your garden?
- How has your heritage influenced your garden?
- What is different about gardening in the United States?

COMMUNITY OF GARDENS
PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent or Legal Guardian,

Our class is participating in a national storytelling program through Smithsonian Gardens. Students will have the opportunity to interview gardeners in their community (family, friends, and community members) and submit their oral history project to *Community of Gardens*, or share their own school garden story with *Community of Gardens*. *Community of Gardens* is an online, digital archive dedicated to preserving garden history stories for future generations and maintained by Smithsonian Gardens. By participating in this project, students will have the opportunity to learn more about the importance of green spaces in their community and, with your permission (the consent form follows), may contribute to a national archive. Before giving consent, learn about the *Community of Gardens* by visiting: <https://communityofgardens.si.edu/faq> and <https://communityofgardens.si.edu/submission-agreement>.

Parental Permission:

I understand that my child is participating in a class project to create stories, photos, videos, interviews, and audio files about gardens, *and if I consent*, my child's teacher may share my child's project with the Smithsonian for possible inclusion in a Smithsonian digital archive, *Community of Gardens*, and related Smithsonian activities. I have reviewed the *Community of Gardens* submission rules and FAQs.

I hereby grant permission for my child's teacher to submit, and for the Smithsonian to generally use, my child's class project, along with his/her first name and (if submitted) likeness without time limit and without compensation to my child or me. This permission includes but is not limited to publication of my child's project, in whole or part, on the *Community of Gardens* website, other Smithsonian communication channels (websites, social media, print and online publications or newsletters), fundraising, educational programming, and exhibitions. I understand this is a public archive,

meaning that if it is selected for inclusion my child's project will be available to the public for personal, educational, or non-commercial uses.

I understand that I can revoke this consent for my child's participation in *Community of Gardens* at any time by contacting Smithsonian Gardens.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Child' Name: _____

Teacher's Name: _____

School Name: _____

Date: ___/___/_____

About *Community of Gardens*: *Community of Gardens* is a free, non-commercial digital archive and website created and managed by Smithsonian Gardens, part of the Smithsonian Institution. The archive is a collection of stories about gardens and gardeners added by the general public, ranging from interviews with family and neighbors, stories of backyards and community gardens, and memories of gardens past. With the help of the public, including students and teachers, we hope to preserve these community stories for future generations of gardeners and historians.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact Smithsonian Gardens at communityofgardens@si.edu or 202-633-5840.

- Information about the project is available at:
<https://communityofgardens.si.edu/faq>
- A complete description of *Community of Gardens*, and the information that it collects from users, is described in the Submission Agreement:
<https://communityofgardens.si.edu/submission-agreement> and Privacy Statement: <http://www.si.edu/Privacy>

COMMUNITY OF GARDENS
INTERVIEWEE CONSENT FORM

Dear Interviewee,

Our class is participating in a national storytelling program through Smithsonian Gardens. Students will have the opportunity to interview gardeners in their community (family, friends, and community members) and submit their oral history project to *Community of Gardens*, an online, digital archive dedicated to preserving garden history stories for future generations and maintained by Smithsonian Gardens. By participating in this project, students will have the opportunity to learn more about the importance of green spaces in their community and, with your permission (the consent form follows), may contribute to a national archive. Before giving consent, learn about the *Community of Gardens* by visiting: <https://communityofgardens.si.edu/faq> and <https://communityofgardens.si.edu/submission-agreement>.

Consent Form:

I understand that my interviewer is participating in a class project to create stories, photos, videos, interviews, and audio files about gardens, *and if I consent*, my interviewer's teacher may share my interview with the Smithsonian for possible inclusion in a Smithsonian digital archive, *Community of Gardens*, and related Smithsonian activities. I have reviewed the *Community of Gardens* submission rules and FAQs.

I hereby grant permission for my interviewer's teacher to submit, and for the Smithsonian to generally use, my interview, along with my first name and last initial, and (if submitted) likeness without time limit and without compensation to me. This permission includes but is not limited to publication of my interview, in whole or part, on the *Community of Gardens* website, other Smithsonian communication channels (websites, social media, print and online publications or newsletters), fundraising, educational programming, and exhibitions. I understand this is a public archive,

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Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ___/___/_____

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