Introduction

Do you collect anything? At the Archives of American Gardens we collect images of gardens from across the United States. We have over 6,500 gardens in our collection! To help us manage and search for the images we need, we use a database called Smithsonian Institution Research Information System (SIRIS). SIRIS is an interactive web-based system that provides access to research resources held by archives, libraries and research units throughout the Smithsonian. Each picture is labeled with key words. When you search for a garden using one of these keywords in SIRIS, it matches the words to the tags on the images.

The first part of this lesson plan provides a series of images from Smithsonian Gardens’ Archive of American Gardens (AAG). You will learn how to identify garden elements and become familiar with the terms Smithsonian Gardens (SG) uses to classify the garden features. Then you’ll be able to better understand the terms used in SIRIS, search for pictures for your projects and use the “accepted” terms to describe the features in the gardens near your home or school. This special language was created by the Library of Congress for all librarians, archivists, garden designers, historians and researchers to understand exactly what is meant by each term.

Once you complete the exercise and are familiar with the AAG terms, look around your school, home or neighborhood for the garden features listed in the activity. After you have found some of the items, create your own collection of images by photographing what you find. Then tag the pictures with accepted AAG terms.

Once you have tagged the images, share them with your classmates. Ask them to add other tags they would use to describe the images. They can use AAG terms or create new tags that best describe the picture. For more information, please see the section on AAG’s Virtual Volunteer program: http://www.gardens.si.edu/horticulture/res_ed/AAG/crosssearchtagging.htm.

The second part of this lesson provides instructions on how to use the SIRIS database to search for information, as well as more examples of garden elements. Your mission in this activity will be to search for garden images by using SIRIS in order to find an inspiration for your own garden design. Examine the differences and similarities between these garden images and the images you collected in Part 1. Write a poem or short story about an image you enjoy most.

Follow the instructions below to begin!
Length of activity: 30-45 minutes
Age: 8-11

Learning Goals:

- Get students to develop their critical thinking skills by searching for garden features. Students will learn by drawing generalizations from specific examples and apply these examples to those that they find, learning through comparison.
- Help students to understand the diversity and importance of garden features and to recognize them in their own communities.
- Introduce students to using an online database system for research.
- Help students navigate and identify helpful online sources.
- Present students with the opportunity to make their own choices about what garden features they find appealing for their projects (critical thinking and decision making skills).
- Understand how a technical language can help communication in a specialized subject.

National Education Standards:

- **Language Arts:** [NL-ENG.K-12.4](#) Communication Skills; [NL-ENG.K-12.6](#) Applying Knowledge; [NL-ENG.K-12.11](#) Participating in Society; [NL-ENG.K-12.8](#) Developing Research Skills
- **Arts:** [NA-VA.5-8.4](#) Understanding the Visual Arts in Relation to History and Cultures

What you'll need:

- Pencils or pens
- Copies of the “Garden Features Treasure Hunt” worksheets.
- A camera(s) or sketch pads to visually record and collect what you find.
- Parents or teachers should plan a route to walk through their neighborhood, backyard, park or local public garden.
- A computer with Internet access
- Handouts on using SIRIS (attached)
- List of garden terms (attached)

Vocabulary

- Allée
- Archive
- Bench
- Birdbath
- Courtyard garden
- Database
- Fence
- Fountain
- Gate
- Gazebo
- Hedge
- Keyword
- Mural
- Parterre
- Patio
- Planter
- Pond
- Rock garden
- Roof garden
- Sculpture
- Tags
- Topiary
- Urn
- Window Box

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Activity: Part 1

1. In the classroom or at home: Have students look through the images and descriptions on the “Garden Features Treasure Hunt” sheet. Have them learn the names and uses of each feature.

2. On your walk: Have students bring the sheets along (maybe using clipboards or a notebook to write on) and search for features in the landscape that resemble those in the pictures. In pairs or individually, each student should record what and how many garden features they find. If feasible, students can also take pictures of these discoveries. Did students find any features they would add to the list? Create or find definitions for things they would like to add to the list.

3. If a walk is not possible, use SIRIS to search for images in Archives of American Gardens. Create a poster or diorama of a garden and include its features. Make a list of the SIRIS terms used for the garden elements in the poster. Make another list of terms they think best describe the elements. Refer to this as tagging – the process of describing features in an image for the purpose of making research easier.

4. In the classroom or at home: After returning, discuss what the students found. Were they able to find all the garden features? How were the features they found different from those in the pictures?

5. Share your pictures and tags with us at gardens.si.edu.
Garden Terms

These are some terms an archivist, librarian, or historian would use to describe elements in a garden.

- **Allée**: A French word that refers to a straight walk in a garden, lined by trees or hedges. The path is usually gravel, sand, or grass.
- **Bench**: a comfortable place to sit and enjoy the garden!
- **Birdbath**: a bowl-shaped sculpture with shallow water intended to attract birds.
- **Courtyard garden**: a garden with surrounding walls or buildings.
- **Fence**: a barrier designed to enclose or divide an area, often to keep animals out.
- **Fountain**: a water display using jets or streams, often with sculptures.
- **Gate**: a piece of fence on hinges used to enter and exit a garden.
- **Gazebo**: a small garden pavilion used as a place for people to gather and look at the garden.
- **Hedge**: a line of tightly growing shrubs or trees, usually grown and trimmed to create a border between spaces.
- **Mural**: a two-dimensional artwork, often painted on the side of a building.
- **Parterre**: a French word meaning "on the ground," it refers to ornamental arrangements of flower beds in different shapes and sizes. For this reason, a parterre is often meant to be viewed from above.
- **Patio**: a space, usually paved, within a garden used for sitting, dining, relaxing, etc.
- **Planter**: a raised space for growing plants above ground level.
- **Pond**: a body of water, smaller than a lake, often human-created.
- **Rock garden**: a garden where plants are grown amongst rocks.
- **Roof garden**: a garden grown on top of a building.
- **Sculpture**: a three-dimensional artwork.
- **Topiary**: the cutting and shaping of trees or hedges into various forms, often in geometrical shapes or to represent animals or other objects.
- **Urn**: a large, decorative vase or pot, often used to display plants.
- **Window Box**: a type of planter or mini-garden hung outside of windows to provide added decoration to a house or other building.

**What words or phrases would you use to describe a garden?** Try going to the Archives of American Gardens Virtual Volunteer website and tag garden images with the words or phrases you would use to describe a garden!
Instructions: How many of these garden features can you find around your neighborhood? Your mission is to find as many as you can. Remember, they might not look quite the same! There are many variations of these common garden features. Can you find any elements not on the list? Create or define anything you discover that is not on the list.

**Allée:** A French word that refers to a straight walk in a garden, lined by trees or hedges. The path is usually gravel, sand, or grass.

Did you find this feature? _____
Describe the allée you found: _______

**Birdbath:** A shallow, bowl-shaped sculpture with water that attracts birds.

Did you find this feature? _______
Were there birds in the birdbath? _______
What other features surrounded the birdbath? _______

**Bench:** A comfortable place to sit and enjoy the garden!

Did you find this feature? _______
Was this bench wooden, metal, or another material? _______

**Courtyard:** A garden closely surrounded by walls or buildings.

Did you find this feature? _______
Describe how you feel in this courtyard: _______
**Fence:** a barrier designed to enclose or divide an area, often to keep animals out.

Did you find this feature? _______  
What is the fence separating? _______

**Gazebo:** a small garden pavilion used as a place for people to gather and look at the garden.

Did you find this feature? _______  
How many people do you think could fit in this gazebo? _______

**Fountain:** a water display using jets or streams, often with sculptures.

Did you find this feature? _______  
Describe the sound the fountain makes: _______  

**Gate:** a piece of fence on hinges used to enter and exit a garden.

Did you find this feature? _______  
Where does it lead to? _______

**Gazebo:** a small garden pavilion used as a place for people to gather and look at the garden.

Did you find this feature? _______  
How many people do you think could fit in this gazebo? _______
**Hedge:** a line of tightly growing shrubs or trees, usually grown and trimmed to create a border.

*Did you find this feature? _______

How is this similar to a fence?

______

**Parterre:** a French word meaning “on the ground,” it refers to ornamental arrangements of flower beds in different shapes and sizes. For this reason, a parterre is often meant to be viewed from above.

*Did you find this feature? _______

What shapes do you see? _______

**Mural:** a two-dimensional artwork, often painted on the side of a building.

*Did you find this feature? _______

What does this mural depict?

______

**Patio:** a space, usually paved, within a garden used for sitting, dining, relaxing, etc.

*Did you find this feature? _______

What other objects are on this patio? _______
Planter: a raised space for growing plants above ground level.

Did you find this feature? ______
How many different flowers are planted here? ______

Pond: a body of water, smaller than a lake, sometimes human-created.

Did you find this feature? ______
What animals are in or near the pond? ______

Rock garden: a garden where plants are grown among rocks.

Did you find this feature? ______
How many big rocks can you find? ______

Roof garden: a garden grown on top of a building.

Did you find this feature? ______
On what type of building is it? ______
**Sculpture:** a three-dimensional artwork.

Did you find this feature? _______
Describe what it looks like: _______

**Topiary:** the cutting and shaping of trees or hedges into various forms, often in geometrical shapes or to represent animals or other objects.

Did you find this feature? _______
What does this topiary look like? _______

**Urn:** a large, decorative vase or pot, often used to display plants.

Did you find this feature? _______
What is growing out of it? _______

**Window Box:** a type of planter or mini-garden hung outside of windows to provide added decoration to a house or other building.

Did you find this feature? _______
How many windows have a window box here? _______
Activity: Part 2

1. Have students log on to www.siris.si.edu (individually or in pairs, depending upon availability of computers).

2. Hand out copies of the worksheets (attached) to each student.

3. Student should go through each of the worksheet activity steps to find gardens of interest to them.

4. Students should choose the image they like the most and use it as inspiration to write a story or poem.

5. Use the activity questions to help students get started.

Additional information on using SIRIS can be found here: www.gardens.si.edu/horticulture/res_ed/AAG/searching.htm
Note: Below are three different options for searching for images from the Archives of American Gardens. Each searches the same information, but with a slightly different format.

**Part I**

**Instructions for using SIRIS:**

1. Look at your copy of the “Garden Terms” sheet. Choose 2-4 features you like the most. Write them down in the space provided on your “searching for inspiration” worksheet.
2. Using a web browser application, log on to www.siris.si.edu.
3. Under the heading “Archives, Manuscripts & Photographic Collections” click on the link that reads “Search Catalog”.
4. Once you arrive at the Keyword searching page, type the name of one of the garden elements you selected in step number 1 in the box labeled “General Keyword.” Click on the arrow button to the right of the box to begin your search.
5. When your search page loads, you should limit your search to the “Archives of American Gardens” by choosing this option from the “Limit by” pull down menu on the top right side of the screen.
6. Scroll to find thumbnail images showing the element you searched for on the right side of the screen. (Note that not every entry may have an image.)
7. Click on the thumbnail image to see a larger version of the same image.
8. When you find a thumbnail of a garden that you like, click on “show details” on the right hand side of the screen near the left of the small image.
9. Locate the “Local Number” or “Call No.” and location for each image you choose. Fill in this information on your sheet.
10. Why did you choose this image? Why does it inspire you? Record your ideas on your worksheet.
11. Repeat these steps for each garden feature you chose!
Instructions for using Smithsonian Collections Search Center:

1. Look at your copy of the “Garden Terms” sheet. Choose 2-4 features you like the most. Write them down in the space provided on your “searching for inspiration” worksheet.

2. Using a web browser application, log on to http://collections.si.edu/search/

3. In the search box, type in the name of one element you chose.

4. Before you start searching through images, you need to select your data source. Scroll down and look at the menu on the left hand side of the screen until you find a link labeled “data source.” Click on it to reveal all the possible data sources. Then, choose “Archives of American Gardens.” Now you can begin searching for garden images.

5. Scroll to find images showing the garden element you searched for.

6. Click on the thumbnail image of a garden that you like to see a larger version of the same image.

7. When you find a thumbnail of a garden that you like, click on “expand” on the right hand side of the screen next to each image.

8. Locate the “Local Number” or “Call No.” and location for each image you choose. Fill in this information on your sheet.

9. Why did you choose this image? Why does it inspire you? Record your ideas on your worksheet.

10. Repeat these steps for each garden feature you chose!
Instructions for searching images by subject:

1. Using a web browser application, log on to www.siris.si.edu.
2. Under the heading “Archives, Manuscripts & Photographic Collections” click on the link that reads “Search Catalog”
3. Click on “Browse Images” at the top of the page.
4. Scroll down the page to the heading “Images by Smithsonian Repository”
5. Click on “Archives of American Gardens”
6. Click on the icon in the middle, “Search Images By Subject”
7. Explore some of the subjects by clicking on them.
8. Choose 2-4 garden images. They can show any subject(s) you choose.
9. Record the location and call number and why this garden inspires you on your “searching for inspiration” worksheet.

Part II

Now, choose one of the images you recorded. Look it up on SIRIS again using the call number. Examine the image in detail. Write a poem or short story about what you see. As you start to write, consider the following questions:

1. Are there colors, plants, or other elements that draw you to this image?

2. Who might use this garden?

3. Where is the garden located?

4. What do you think it would be like to walk around this garden? What do you imagine it would smell like?
1. Garden feature: ___________ Call/Local Number: ___________
   Garden location: _______________
   What inspires you about this image?

2. Garden feature: ___________ Call/Local Number: ___________
   Garden location: _______________
   What inspires me about this image?

3. Garden feature: ___________ Call/Local Number: ___________
   Garden location: _______________
   What inspires you about this image?

4. Garden element: ________________ Call/Local Number: ___________
   Garden location: _______________
   What inspires you about this image?