



## MSU Tollgate Gardens

### THE ENABLING GARDEN

The Tollgate Enabling garden was inspired by the book "The Enabling Garden" by Gene Rother. This garden design allows individuals who are experiencing various levels of flexibility and mobility challenges to continue to garden. Elevated containers eliminate the need for excessive reaching, bending, stooping, and kneeling associated with the traditional garden. This garden provides for three types of accessibility: 1) the lower containers allow gardening from a seated position, as from a chair or bench.



2) The higher containers allow a standing position for those who require a walker, cane or other means for support. The design of these containers also allows the gardener to lean on them for support to assist with balance.



Trellis added to container for vining plants

3) The table gardens are of the correct height to allow a wheelchair to slide under, or if constructed in a "U" shape to be seated and have easy reach to either side.

#### CREATING YOUR ENABLING GARDEN

There is a wide range of containers that can be used to modify to the abilities of gardener. Examples using large pots elevated securely atop bricks and a small animal water trough are two examples demonstrated in this garden. Others include those structures that can be custom built or bought pre-fabricated for this purpose.

By design these gardens are essentially container gardens. Those principles used in container gardening are utilized in this application as well. When choosing the planters there needs to be sufficient depth to hold the soil and a source of drainage. Though many styles of pots are available and appropriate there are also many pre-fabricated containers constructed of a sturdy vinyl or rot resistant lumber that are designed for this type of garden. When selecting a container, it is essential to check for drainage holes or the ability to add them if necessary.

Once you have taken into consideration the abilities and needs of the gardener and have selected your containers next take into consideration the essential horticultural needs of the plants: sunlight, soil, and water.



A fairy garden for younger visitors

Choose a site for your enabling garden that will receive the best sunlight exposure for your plants. Will there be different amounts of sunlight in areas within the same garden? The Tollgate Enabling Garden demonstrates a shady end under a nearby maple and a sunny end in the opposite corner. You will need to select your plants that require the same light requirements available at your site.

Potting soil or a raised bed mixture is recommended since it is a lighter weight and easier consistency to work with in a container. The lighter soil allows for air and water to reach the roots. Potting soils do not hold nutrients as long as in-ground plantings and regular fertilization may be required to get maximum bloom and



Various annuals for color and interest



Waist height planters with removable tubs

health of your plants. Water soluble organic fertilizers such as fish or seaweed emulsions are readily available and work well as a soil drench for nutrients.

Next to consider is a supplemental water supply for the garden. Siting close to a water spigot is ideal to water with a hose or watering can. Other options of using roof run-off into a rain barrel or a drip irrigation system as demonstrated in the Enabling Garden at Tollgate. Deep watering will encourage deeper root growth which is an advantage for the plant. Make sure your containers are raised off a deck or patio to allow excess water to escape away from the pot. If the container is placed on soil/ground it will drain without need for further measures.



A pre-fab container with tomatoes

## PLANTS FOR COLOR, TOUCH AND SMELL !

Lamium  
 Cassia didymobotrya - Popcorn plant  
 Acalypha - red, lanceolata, copperleaf  
 Acalypha Pendula- 'Firetail'  
 Ipomoea- 'Sweet Caroline'  
 Pelargonium - 'Lady Plymouth'  
 Dorotheanthus - 'Livingston Daisy'  
 Begonia - 'Dragon Wing Red'  
 Cuphea - 'Firecracker'  
 Helichrysum - 'Aurea', 'Limelight'  
 Salvia - 'Vista Purple'  
 Zinnia -'Magellan Cherry'  
 Heliotrope

## PLANTS FOR FAIRY GARDEN

Mimosa pudica  
 Peperomia 'Piccolo Banda'  
 Peperomia 'Hope'  
 Sedum and succulents  
 Plumosa fern  
 Pilea involucreta –Friendship plant  
 Hypoestes- Polka dot plant

## HERBS AND VEGETABLES

Foeniculum vulgata dulce -Bronze Fennel  
 Peppers 'Corna di Toro '  
 Eucalyptus citriodora  
 Tomato 'Fourth of July'  
 Saliva tricolor officinalis  
 Rosemary 'Speedy'  
 Purple basil  
 Variegated oregano



Unique plants of varied texture and scent

Annual plants are best suited for this type of garden, since perennial plantings would require digging in or moving to a sheltered area to protect their roots for the winter. Selection of plants, as in any garden setting, still utilizes the principle of "right plant for the right place". Larger plants generally have larger roots and will need the proper larger size container. Select and group your plants together based on their similar horticultural needs for best success.

Be creative in your use of colors, textures and scents. Consider growing some edible plantings such as peppers, tomatoes and herbs and salad greens. There are few limitations if your are providing the right conditions.

An enabling garden is a great way to provide an accessible gardening experience for those with disabilities, to extend the gardening years for seniors with mobility or flexibility issues and to provide younger children with their first up close learning opportunity with how plants grow!

## MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center



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