

CARING FOR YOUR GARDEN

Gardens are living communities, and they need different things over their whole life to stay healthy. There are many things gardeners do to care for their plants.

VISIT YOUR SIT SPOT

1. Start by spending 7 minutes making observations from your sit spot.
 - What changes have you observed over a week?
 - Do the plants around you seem healthy?
 - Do you notice any animals interacting with plants? If so, what are they doing?
2. After 7 minutes, use your nature journal to write or draw what you remember observing.

CHECK ON YOUR ADOPTED PLANT

- Has it changed since yesterday?
- Does it seem like it has everything it needs? Consider space, light, water, air, nutrients, soil, and any other plant needs you know.
- How else can you help your plant grow?

WHAT IS A PLANT LIFE CYCLE?

A flowering plant starts as a seed. Here are images of a lotus flower at different stages of its life cycle, starting on the top left with a bud that opens into a flower. When the flower gets pollinated, it can begin to form seeds. When the seeds are mature, the openings in the seed head open up enough for the seeds to fall out. Lotuses grow in shallow water, so the seeds fall into water to germinate.



Image from: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/gspragin/1162774858>

PROVIDING SUPPORT

Does your plant support itself or does it need something to support it? Plants like tomatoes will flop over if nothing supports them. Some gardeners use a tomato cage to support tomato plants.

Plants that are vines need something to support them as they grow. Vines form curly tendrils that grab on to other plants or solid structures for support. Here is an image of a cucumber vine with a tendril wrapped around the branch of an okra plant.

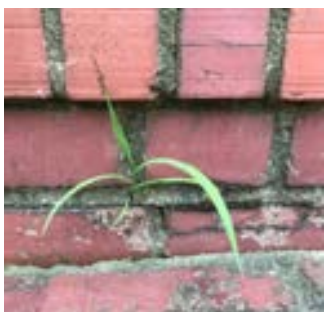


LABEL YOUR PLANTS

Make a label that won't wash away or fade in the sun so that you can remember what you planted. You could write on a popsicle stick with permanent marker, you could make a label that looks like a little flag by wrapping duct tape around a stick, you could paint on a rock, or you could come up with your own way to make a label. You could also make a map on paper that shows what you planted in different locations.

WEEDING

In addition to giving plants the right amount of sun, water, and nutrients, another task gardeners spend a lot of time doing is weeding. Gardeners pull weeds to make sure that the plants they want to grow have enough space and access to water and nutrients.



But what is a weed? A weed is any plant growing in a place you don't want it to grow. Many plants that are considered weeds are very successful at spreading their seeds so that they show up in many places. This includes plants like dandelions, buttercups, plantain, and purple deadnettle. Here is a list of names and pictures of common lawn weeds in North Carolina <https://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/weeds-in-turf/>. Many weeds can survive without much water or nutrients.

Can you find any weeds growing? If you want to remove any weeds, make sure you have permission and be sure it is a weed before you remove it.

Some seeds can grow in surprising places. Can you find any plants growing in sidewalk cracks or other surprising places?

