



## Planning

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### Creating a Living Sculpture in Your Community

As you get ready to plan your living sculpture project, there are many ways to prepare. Of course, the fun part is deciding what to create. Depending on what you choose to do, this may be an exciting, yet challenging undertaking, particularly if you settle on a public piece of living sculpture. Here you'll find a checklist of items to consider as you plan. Some of these are specific to living sculpture and others are more general - we hope it's helpful to you for this project and others.

#### Project leader checklist

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#### Project leader checklist

##### Some Practical Starters

- Look through the activity in advance and gather all the supplies you need ahead of time.
- Note any special skills required, time required for creating the project, and time that may be required for the project to grow into maturity.
- Read about maintenance needs well before you begin!

##### Strategies for Implementing Activities

- Start with an easier activity and build up to a larger public piece.
- Allow young people to do as much as they can instead of describing it to them.
- Keep the process simple and easy to follow.
- Ask open-ended questions as you're working together.
- Increase difficulty appropriately and avoid making tasks overly complicated.

##### Site Considerations



- Living sculpture projects will need full sun, good soil drainage and access to water.
- Consider how easily you can access the site with necessary tools, equipment and materials. For example, can a truck, filled with rolls of sod, park near this area? Can willow stems be carried easily from where you park? Will it be relatively easy to water your project?
- Vandalism happens, but is certainly lessened by much public involvement – people do not damage what they own and love. That said, consider site security and whether there are issues you need to address.
- For more general garden-based information, please visit:  
<http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/>

### Activity Design

- Work with young people to choose an activity that they believe will be interesting, fun, exciting, and meaningful.
- Make sure that the project is clear to young people and that they understand what it is you're doing.
- Whenever possible, try one of the outdoor or on-site activities, so that your living sculpture is in full view as part of the community.
- Provide the chance to enjoy the challenge of doing a more difficult project after you've gotten your feet wet. Appropriately stage the level of difficulty.
- Encourage young people to share what you've done with others through posters, presentations and other means.

### Engaging Youth in the Process

- Ask young people which project they find interesting.
- Give young people responsibility and voice in the project. There are many activities to choose from, particularly as you move toward larger public pieces. Engage their thinking about what you might create, why it might be most compelling for your community, whom you might involve, and where the ideal location would be. Brainstorm with them what resources are necessary, where donations for materials could come from, and who has key skills and might assist you.
- Build on what they already know; how does living sculpture relate to other topics and activities they've been involved in?



### Connecting with Others

- Ask nursery and garden center staff, cooperative extension educators, or local college horticulture staff to teach new skills, such as pruning and grafting. Although as a leader you may be unfamiliar with these techniques, there are likely others in your area that could help. We hope that you don't, for example, exclude tree sculpture just because it may require some grafting.
- Engage parents and family members in the project.
- Identify others in the community with talents, skills and resources related to living sculpture.
- Encourage young people to share what they have done with others and display their creations.
- If you plan a larger work, engage others in the planning process. "Who needs to know?" If your living sculpture will be located on the school grounds, don't forget the grounds crew and custodial staff. If you create a project in a community green space, consider city or village officials, site neighbors and others who may want to become involved, in addition to administrators.

### Active Learning

- Living sculpture by its very nature lends itself to experiential learning. Try hands on activities whenever possible.
- There may be opportunities to learn new skills, such as grafting and laying sod. Some of these skills are particularly compelling to older youth that have done the "seed in a cup" garden-based activities numerous times (been there, and done that).
- Find out what happens "if." Imagine the results of your work before you begin.
- Although we offer guidelines, the youth may want to invent their own approach to



living sculpture.

### **Fostering Respect and Positive Group Dynamics**

- Let young people know what is expected of them.
- Interact with young people and seek their input into topics of interest.
- Encourage cooperation and group work at all levels of the project.
- Help young people set achievable goals with respect to any public works of art that they settle on. An outdoor sod sofa might be more manageable than entire living room suite, at least initially.
- Encourage two- or three-way communication: leaders ask questions, young people converse, young people ask questions.
- Encourage young people to value other learning styles and approaches to learning.
- Discuss the value of what young people are doing in the community, and even with the introductory activities.
- Find out what skills young people have and what they already know about art and horticulture.

### **Creating an Organized and Supportive Environment**

- Have contingency plans for when difficulties come up. If weather prevents your best laid plans from happening, what might you do instead?
- Incorporate time for discovery and messing about with materials.
- Before you embark on a living sculpture in your community: are you committed, interested, helpful and motivated?
- Avoid demeaning comments and emphasize what young people are doing well.
- Provide appropriate encouragement to young people as they are working. Sometimes this is hard work, and an installation may take a day or more to complete.
- Encourage a feeling of accomplishment when a project works, as well as learning from what didn't go so well.
- Try to be sensitive to where young people are at.
- Emphasize mastery.
- Take time to get to know the young people in the project.
- Focus constructive feedback on the process or activity.
- Challenge the youth: hold high but realistic expectations.
- Give young people guidelines for when to seek help.
- Include food or snacks.
- Hold a celebration at the project's completion.



### **Real World Art and Horticulture**


- Link your project with what others are doing; learn about other approaches, and communicate with others about your efforts.
- Do something with "real artists." Invite others in your community to participate.

### **Ensure that the Experience is Meaningful**

- Start the activity with a community issue kids may have heard about.
- Help young people understand, "why does this matter?"
- Engage older kids in mentoring younger ones.
- Assist young people in seeing the relationship of the living sculpture to art, the garden, science, and the world around them.
- Discuss how a living sculpture project might contribute to answering larger questions that are meaningful and relevant to them.
- Build in time to give young people a chance to critically reflect on their experiences; encourage journaling and other forms of critical reflection.
- Encourage both group problem solving and time alone.
- Carry the activity out over a period of time, instead of only getting together with a group once.
- Talk about other issues in young people's lives as a way to connect with them.



Adapted from a Program Planning Tool, Developed by the 4-H Science and Technology Program Work Team, March 2003

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### [Getting Started with Your Project](#)

A living sculpture project interests you but you're not sure where to start and who to get involved? Getting Started with Your Gardening Program helps answer the questions like where did the idea come from and who will be involved? It also covers youth participation and the importance of ownership as well as logistics such as spreading the word and fundraising.

### [Youth Development](#)

Meeting the needs of children and youth through garden-based learning experiences...mastery, belonging, generosity, and power.

What constitutes an ideal experience for young people? The ultimate goal of a project isn't always the finished product. Often the project is a vehicle for growing competent, committed, reflective, and caring young people. We've expanded our notion of what constitutes an ideal experience for young people, and have looked increasingly toward the four themes of positive youth development, provided several years ago to the CCE system by Dr. Cathann Kress.

### [Benefits and Barriers to Youth Participation](#)

It is not uncommon to face questions or even meet with a little resistance when trying to increase youth participation or form youth-adult partnerships in your program. The following may help you make your case by addressing common barriers and benefits to greater youth involvement and decision-making.

## **Youth-Adult Partnerships**

### ["Taming" the Overly Enthusiastic Adult](#)

Often times, when adult leaders launch a new project designed for youth and adults to work in partnership they are surprised to find that their biggest challenge isn't engaging young people; it's often curbing enthusiastic grown-ups who rush to "take over." Here are some ideas for fostering partnership without bruising adult feelings along the way.

### [What are Youth-Adult Partnerships? Why are they Important? and How do I Develop Youth-Adult Partnerships in my Community?](#)

From the National 4-H Council and the University of Arizona, a brief overview of the how's and why's of Youth-Adult Partnerships.

### [Tips for Building Youth-Adult Partnerships](#)

The Texas Network of Youth Services offers ten tips for adults working with youth and ten tips for youth working with adults.

## **Community Development**

### [Community Action](#)

Living Sculpture projects often develop into public works, art that benefits the greater community. 4-H's Youth Community Action (YCA) captures the essence of YCA, youth and adults learning, sharing leadership, taking action, and making a difference in their communities in this helpful diagram.



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