

# DIG ART!

CULTIVATING CREATIVITY  
IN THE GARDEN



## Mosaic Making: Flower Mandala

**Overview** Students will work as a group to create a mosaic flower mandala using natural plant materials found in the garden.

**Objectives** Students will:

- work together to create a design using natural and found materials
- experience the beauty and practice of creating ephemeral art

**Time** 2-3 hours

**Materials**

- flower petals and other plant parts, such as stems and stalks, harvested from the garden
- paper and pencil
- camera

**Instructions**

1. Begin by discussing the concept of art made with nature. Show some of Andy Goldsworthy's artwork and discuss how he creatively uses natural materials found in the outdoors (see Resources).

2. Introduce your students to the concept of a mandala. Mandala is a Sanskrit word that roughly translates as "sacred circle". Discuss the sacredness of the circle symbol in many cultures around the world. Historically, mandalas have been made with many different types of natural materials, including flowers. Show students images of flower mandalas (see Resources for more information).

3. Organize your students into groups to create their own mandala designs. As they begin the design process, advise them to consider things such as balance, color, texture, placement, and the centers of their mandalas.

4. Once the groups have created their designs, go out into the garden and discuss with students their task—to collect the materials they need to create their mandala project. They may use flower petals, grasses, rocks, or any other natural material found in the garden. Be sure to set limits on where and how much to pick, so that the garden is still left with blooms and leaves.



5. Once they have collected the materials they need, invite each group to work together to create their collective mandalas. Challenge them to create a special or sacred space while they create the mandala, perhaps even working in silence.
6. Flower mandalas can be made both indoors and outdoors. Mandalas that are made indoors can be made on a sheet of paper or cardboard. They will likely be smaller in scale, but will be easier to show to peers and will last as long as the plant materials stay fresh. Mandalas that are made outdoors can be much larger in scale and will be truly ephemeral in nature—changing and degrading as it is exposed to the natural outdoor elements.



7. Once all of the groups have completed their work, invite each group to talk about the process of designing, harvesting materials, and creating their mosaic mandalas. Be sure to take photos of their works of art while they are presenting.
8. Finally, discuss the impermanent nature of the things in the natural world, and the uniqueness of nature of creating something that is ephemeral, and that will gradually lose its form and structure over time.

### **Taking it Further**

A great way to take this activity further and build off the concepts learned in this activity would be to create digital flower mandalas from photos. This is a very popular digital art form where original photos of flowers and nature are digitally transformed into colorful, kaleidoscopic designs. See the suggested websites below for more information on how to do this activity.