



Psalm 23 Garden School Resources

These resources have been written to accompany the Psalm 23 Garden which is being exhibited at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2021.

Bible Society set award-winning garden designer Sarah Eberle the challenge of designing a garden inspired by the ever-popular Psalm 23, 'The Lord is my shepherd'.



This resource will help your school to create its own Psalm 23-inspired garden, and help your pupils to learn about Psalm 23 and how gardens feature in the Bible.

The resource is in three parts:

- 1 p. 2** A guide to making your own Psalm 23-inspired garden in your school.
- 2 p. 7** An assembly on Psalm 23, which can be used as a stand-alone assembly or in association with a Psalm 23-inspired school garden.
- 3 p.10** Some activities for the children to do. Again, these can either be linked to a Psalm 23-inspired school garden or used as stand-alone activities.
 - Psalm 23 breaks down the Psalm and guides the children through it
 - A wordsearch on Psalm 23
 - Some ideas for making signs to go in the garden
 - 'Two gardens in the Bible' looks at the garden of Eden and the garden of Gethsemane



Create your own Psalm 23-inspired garden in your school

School gardens offer both staff and pupils a place where they can be quiet and reflective, be surrounded by nature, even in the middle of a city, and engage with the natural world. Any school can have a school garden, whether there is a lot of space available or only a little. There are just four basic steps to creating your own Psalm 23-inspired garden in your school, which means that the garden can be created on anything from a grand scale on a large plot to just a few raised beds in the corner of a playground. There's no need to be over ambitious. Starting off small, and then possibly expanding the garden once the first area is established, is a very practical way to go about a project like this, especially if you are creating the garden from scratch.

Key elements of the Psalm 23 Garden



Meadow



Seating



A tree



Water



Britain has lost 97 per cent of its meadowland since 1945, impacting on the wildlife which uses it as a habitat, especially a wide range of insect and butterfly species. So, in creating your Psalm 23 garden, why not incorporate an area of meadow and help redress the balance?

An area of meadow, which can be of any size or shape, will add colour, movement and texture to your garden. You can create metre-wide strips of wildflowers on either side of a path. With larger areas of meadow, mow paths through it so that the children can get into the middle.

Creating an area of wildflower meadow should increase both the number and variety of wildlife which the children can see. Not only bees, butterflies and dragonflies, but also grasshoppers, bugs, spiders and even the odd shrew will appreciate the long-grass habitat. Children can become more familiar with the wildlife around them, and perhaps learn to overcome any fears of creepy-crawlies!

The sort of grass found in British lawns and school fields is pretty tough stuff, which makes it hard for wildflowers to take hold. So, there are a couple of options you could follow.

The first option is to take up the existing grass and lay wildflower turf in its place. These are pre-sown with annual wildflowers such as cornflowers or poppies. It is important to let the flowers go to seed, so that the seeds can then germinate and provide next year's flowers.

The second option is simply to let an area of your existing grass grow long and see what comes up through it. There are usually wildflowers in grass which, if given the opportunity, will grow to their full height and flower.

With either of these options, you can also add in some pockets of perennial wildflowers such as ox-eye daisy, ragged robin, cowslips and scabious, which can be bought as small plug plants, or ornamental grasses.

A really good plant to introduce, however, is yellow rattle. It is a parasitic plant and lives on the thatch of the grass. So, it reduces the grass sward and makes space for wild flowers to seed themselves and get established. Sow the seeds in late autumn or early winter for them to germinate in the following spring.

If your school has only hard-surfaced outdoor areas, wildflowers will also grow in containers and raised beds as long as they are at least 2-3 feet across.

Areas of meadow are easy to maintain. Mow them once in the autumn, when everything has flowered and the seeds have set (but remember to mow around any perennials). Wildflowers do best in poorer soils, so gather up and remove all of the mown grass so that it doesn't enrich the soil.

If you are putting in plant plugs, or laying wildflower turf, remember to keep them watered while they establish themselves, especially if you are planting in summer. Even then, it's worth keeping an eye on the weather and watering if it doesn't rain for a few days.

You could try a stick sundial in the middle of an area of meadow, or you could put up a chalk board and ask the pupils to write down what wildlife they see every month. This will get them really interested and engaged, and it will help them to see the difference the meadow area has made.



Providing a seat in your garden encourages the pupils to stop and enjoy the garden. The ideal would be to provide enough seating for a whole class to use the garden together.

Alternatives to buying new benches include finding some pre-loved garden seats at your local recycling centre, or looking on recycling sites such as Freecycle, Gumtree and Facebay. Raised beds are sometimes formed using recycled railway sleepers, and these can double up as seating as well.



Every garden – no matter how small – can have a tree. It creates a focal point for the eye, gives shade and brings in wildlife. Trees can create the illusion that your space is bigger than it is, and bring both shade and interesting shadows into the garden.

The Psalm 23 garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show demonstrates what can be done with one or two impactful trees in a garden only 10m (30ft) square, but smaller trees are well suited to more modest plots, including ones which will happily grow in containers.

If you are fortunate, there might already be some well-established trees on your school site, or on neighbouring land. If not, consider the space you have. Do you have enough room to start off a large tree that generations in the future will enjoy? Do you want something smaller like a shade-tolerant acer, with its colourful leaves? Or a small conifer for year-round foliage? Or do you want to plant a group of smaller shrubs such as cornus, which have vibrantly-coloured stems in winter?

Fruit trees might be best avoided, unless your pupils all understand that they mustn't eat unripe fruit and will be able to resist the temptation. If you do choose a fruit tree, don't plant it in your meadow, because any windfall fruit will break down and add nutrients to the soil.



The best time to plant a tree is when it's dormant, during autumn and winter. Dig a hole large enough to more than accommodate its root ball. Add a modest amount of well-rotted manure or compost to give it a good start.

If you can, shake some mycorrhizal fungi onto the roots. These effectively extend the tree's roots, enabling it to gain more nutrition from the soil and take up water better. Don't forget to water your tree regularly until it is established, especially if you are planting between February and September.

For schools with only hard-surfaced outdoor areas, many smaller trees grow well in pots or tubs, including acers, cornus, bay trees and (in more sheltered areas) even an olive.

There's a great option on trees, if you are planting your own Psalm 23-inspired garden. We are working with our friends at the Woodland Trust. The Woodland Trust wants to make sure that everybody in the UK has the chance to plant a tree, so it's giving away hundreds of thousands of trees to schools and communities that want to plant on publicly accessible land.

Its packs come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Create homes for wildlife, or brighten up your view with year-round colour. Harvest fruit and nuts or grow your own log burner fuel. Whether your plot is big or small, the Woodland Trust has the right pack for you.

Apply now at woodlandtrust.org.uk/freetrees. Tree planting and care advice for schools and much more, also from the Woodland Trust, can be found at treetoolsforschools.org.uk.



Water adds a sense of relaxation and tranquillity to any garden, however small or large. It's a real pleasure simply to sit and listen to the sound of the water, and watch the light on its surface.

And, of course, water attracts wildlife. Animals and birds will come to drink. Create the right habitat and you may get frogs, newts and a world of insects including damsel flies and dragon flies.

Obviously, however, water can be dangerous, and features such as a pond or a fountain would require fencing off so that pupils can only go near to them under adult supervision, even if they are only shallow and have gently sloping sides. If you intend to install one of these features, you should seek further advice about the safety measures which you should take.

Other ways of bringing the water into the garden include a solar-powered water feature. These are available in a wide range of designs and different materials and use a solar-powered pump to re-circulate water. Or, perhaps a bird bath to further encourage wildlife into the garden, or indeed just a water butt to store rainwater and to teach the children the importance of conserving resources. You could even have imaginary water by having a path through the garden which is coloured blue.



Other thoughts

Look around you to see what kind of trees and plants do well in your local area. Investigating which plants are right for your chosen space could be a project which develops some of your pupils' science and research skills.

The four elements of the Psalm 23 garden are all low-maintenance once they are established, but it is still important that before you begin you have considered how and by whom the garden maintenance jobs will be done.

Consider what local organisations might be willing to provide some help for your garden. Local nurseries, landscape suppliers, garden centres or reclamation yards might be willing to offer a discount or sponsorship – perhaps writing to them to explain about the garden would be a literacy activity for the children to participate in. A plant amnesty, in which parents donate unwanted plants or seeds (or indeed anything else useful to the garden), could get the garden started. Local horticultural societies might also be a useful source of help or advice.

Before you begin, carry out a thorough risk assessment of the work involved in making the garden and of the finished garden itself. Account for, and mitigate the risks associated with things such as water features, plants and their flowers or berries which might be harmful, tools and implements, and poor handwashing and hygiene routines. You might want to consult the advice from the RHS, which can be found at <https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/resources/info-sheet/health-safety-in-the-garden>, which is part of an extensive resource bank which the RHS provides.

Show your design to a wide variety of people with different roles in your school before it is finalised – their different perspectives might reveal something which requires changing or an improvement.

The garden will give your school an outdoor learning space, where the pupils can take part in activities such as:

- Creating a piece of soil art
- Making a wildlife inventory
- Collecting, saving and sowing the seeds from the wildflowers
- Drying and identifying the wildflowers
- Adding things that will attract more wildlife to the garden, such as birdfeeders or bug hotels

We'd love to know how you get on with your Psalm 23-inspired garden. So send the photographs and stories from the garden that you create to:
education@biblesociety.org.uk



An assembly on Psalm 23

Aims

- For the pupils to understand what Psalm 23 is, the message it contains about God and humanity, and the connection between Psalm 23 and their school garden
- If desired, for the pupils to be invited to pray if they wish to, or to have a brief time of quiet self-reflection

Preparation and resources

- The PowerPoint which can be found at biblesociety.org.uk/psalm-23/get-active has some images which can accompany the assembly. The images are from Unsplash (unsplash.com) and are used under the Unsplash licence (unsplash.com/

Open the assembly in your usual way

Begin with some questions to establish that the students understand what a shepherd is

- Do any of you know someone who is a shepherd? This will depend on where you live in the country. Children living in more rural areas will be very familiar with shepherds. If you live in an urban area, have the children visited a city farm and seen sheep cared for there?
- Do you know what a shepherd does?

Introduce the assembly, read Psalm 23 (with the children if they can) and narrow down what a psalm is

In today's assembly, we're going to find out about Psalm 23. It says:

The Lord is my shepherd;
I have everything I need.

He lets me rest in fields of green grass
and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.
He gives me new strength.

He guides me in the right paths, as he has promised

Even if I go through the deepest darkness,
I will not be afraid, Lord,
for you are with me.
Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

You prepare a banquet for me, where all my enemies can see me;
you welcome me as an honoured guest
and fill my cup to the brim.

I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life;
and your house will be my home as long as I live.
Psalm 23 (GNB)

How does it look different from the way that normal writing is laid out? What sort of writing do you think it is? Could it be a poem? Or a song?

Psalms are ancient hymns which are part of the Bible. They are set out like a poem, and they were written to be accompanied by musical instruments. They are one of the parts of the Bible in which the people are talking to God. In some of the psalms, the people sometimes can get quite angry, if they are upset, or maybe even complaining to God. This psalm, though, is a psalm of thanksgiving, in which the writer says 'thank you' to God, and explains what it is about God that he is thankful for.



Add detail about the background and context of the Psalm, including about David, its author

The psalm was written by David, who is a central figure in the story told by the Bible, sometime around 1000 BC (or, at about the same time as the Iron Age, if the pupils have done any work on that).

David was a shepherd boy who achieved fame by defeating the giant Goliath. He then ruled as Israel's king for 40 years. David had experience of being a shepherd himself, and also of following God through difficult times.

Explain the role of a shepherd

David was a king, but before he became a king he had been a shepherd, so being a shepherd was something which he knew all about. In fact, back then, everyone would have known what a shepherd was like, and what they did – spending all day watching over their sheep, taking care of them in all weathers, chasing away dangerous animals. Even when the sheep couldn't see the shepherd, he would tap his stick against a rock so that they could hear that he was close by, and they knew that they didn't need to feel afraid. Shepherds also guided their sheep to places where the grass was good to eat and to streams and pools where they could drink.

But in Psalm 23 David didn't mean that it is him who was a shepherd. The psalm starts with the words, 'The Lord is my shepherd.' That's what the writer said. If the Lord is his shepherd, what must the writer be? David thought that he was like the sheep, and that God was like a shepherd for him.

Ask some questions to recap and help the children to reflect

- What do you think it's like to be a sheep?
- What does the shepherd do for the sheep?
- What makes for a good shepherd? (or conversely, a bad one?)
- How does having a shepherd make a difference to the sheep?

Focus on the themes of grass and water used in the Psalm, just looking at verse 2

Two of the things which David said that God, his shepherd, did for him were:

He lets me rest in fields of green grass
and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.

The imagery of 'green grass' and 'quiet pools of fresh water' probably makes you think of a landscape like ours in this country, lush, green and leafy. Grass and water are things which you might have in your school garden, or in your garden at home.

However, David lived in a part of the world which wasn't like a garden very much at all. The hills in Israel are sandy and stony and baked hot under the sun. Not very much grows there, and there is very little water. That's why the green grass and fresh water were so important to shepherds like David. They could be difficult to find, and they were valuable. The sheep could not live without them.

Draw out the relevance of these themes for Christians

As David did, Christians also believe that God is like a shepherd to them. They believe that God cares for them as the shepherd cares for his sheep, and that God will provide for them and look after them, so they do not need to be afraid.

Make one final link, to being in the school garden

In the school garden, the grass and water might remind you of Psalm 23, and of how David felt that God provided for him as a shepherd does for the sheep. As the sheep need the grass to rest in, and the water to refresh themselves with, the garden might be a place for you to rest and be refreshed. You might find that green grass, and water, and trees and the place to sit, are good places to be calm, and to think, and maybe to do some writing or drawing, or talk to your friends.

If desired, finish by inviting the pupils to pray if they wish, or to have a brief time of quiet self-reflection

Now, I'm going to say a prayer and if you want to make it your prayer say 'Amen' at the end after me.

Dear God,

Thank you that you were like a shepherd to David, caring for him and providing what he needed.

Help us to remember that you will also be a shepherd for us.

Amen



Activities - Psalm 23

- 1** The psalm divides into two halves. The first half is from verse 1 to verse 4, and the second half is from verse 5 to the end verse 6.

In the first part, David compares God to a shepherd.

Use this space to draw two things that you think go with or belong to a shepherd.

- 2** Read Psalm 23 verses 1–4 and match up the ways in which David says God is like a shepherd to him by drawing lines to the right part of the passage.

The Lord is my shepherd;
I have everything I need.

He lets me rest in fields of green grass
and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.
He gives me new strength.

He guides me in the right paths, as he has promised

Even if I go through the deepest darkness,
I will not be afraid, Lord,
for you are with me.

Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

Psalm 23 verses 1–4

A shepherd makes sure that
the sheep follow a safe path.

A shepherd stays with the
sheep to make sure that
they know they are alright.

A shepherd gives the sheep
what they need.

A shepherd protects the
sheep and makes sure that
they are safe from harm.



3 The writer of the psalm says that, because God is like a shepherd to him, he has everything that he needs. Like him, we also have things that we need, and there are sometimes also things that we want.

What is the difference between 'want' and 'need'?
Use a dictionary to look the words up if you need to.

Want	Need
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Which of these things do you think are things that humans might want, and which of them are things that they need?

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Food | Water | Love | Help |
| Trainers | Sweets | A garden | To be able to play |
| To learn | To breathe | Clothes | Books |
| A computer | Music | A car | Holidays |

4 The writer of the psalm says that sometimes he goes through 'the deepest darkness'. By this, he meant the times when he got worried or scared. However, he says that he isn't afraid, because he knows that God is with him to look after him, like a shepherd would look after his sheep.

What sort of things do people might worry or get scared about? **Make a list below.**
For each thing in your list, can you suggest something that someone who is worried about it could do to try to make things better?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



5 In the second part of the psalm, David compares God to someone who is hosting a celebration.

Use this space to draw three things that you think it's important to have at a celebration.

6 Read Psalm 23 verses 5–6.

You prepare a banquet for me, where all my enemies can see me;
you welcome me as an honoured guest
and fill my cup to the brim.

I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life;
and your house will be my home as long as I live.

Psalm 23 verses 5–6

Definitions

A banquet is a really lovely, expensive meal.

An honoured guest is the most important person at the party.

'To the brim' means to the top of a cup, so that it is completely full.

Which of the things David says God does for him do you think is the best? Why?



7 Word search

a x d t h u i o p p w f
f e f s t r e n g t h d
e r y h y u i o c e q b
h o m e h m l p g s b a
o c z p o o l s r a q n
u d b h e a x g a t J q
s m n e c t h j s d g u
e d a r k n e s s r u e
t c v d d a w t n m e t
a s f h y i p a t h s u
w w a t e r g f h k t y
y h f d a e i f o u n b

shepherd

water

darkness

guest

grass

strength

staff

house

pools

paths

banquet

home



8 Two gardens in the Bible

The two well-known gardens which are in the Bible story are the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane (which is pronounced 'Geth-sem-an-ee').

The Garden of Eden is in the book of Genesis, which comes right at the beginning of the Bible. In the Bible story, The Garden of Eden is a place of happiness where Adam and Eve live together happily. The garden was made by God for Adam and Eve to be in, and they were given the responsibility of looking after it and caring for it. This is how the Bible describes the garden:

Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man he had formed. He made all kinds of beautiful trees grow there and produce good fruit. In the middle of the garden there stood the tree that gives life and the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad.

Then the LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and guard it.

Genesis chapter 2 verses 8–9 and 15

In the Bible story above, **underline or highlight** the words which tell us what the garden in Eden was like.

- 9** From this list, **choose four words** to describe what the garden of Eden was like. Colour them in red. You can look up or find out the meaning of any words that you need to.

Bright	Dark	Tidy	Twisty	Green
Peaceful	Designed	Fertile	Natural	Leafy
False	Sad	Scary	Friendly	Productive

- 10** The garden's name 'Eden' comes from a Hebrew word which means 'delightful'. What do you think Adam and Eve might have found delightful about being in the garden in Eden?



- 11** If you could design a garden of your own, what would you put into it to make it delightful for yourself and for other people?

- 12** **In the next part of the Bible story, Adam and Eve disobey God's instructions, so they have to leave the garden.**

In the Bible story, the Garden of Eden gets spoiled by Adam and Eve deliberately choosing to disobey God.

What sort of things might spoil a beautiful garden today?

- 13** What can we do to make sure that our gardens stay lovely places?



- 15** The other well-known garden from the Bible is the Garden of Gethsemane. In the Bible stories of Jesus' life, which are called 'Gospels', the Garden of Gethsemane is where Jesus prays to God just before he is arrested and taken away to be killed, so it is a place associated with sadness and sorrow.

The Garden of Gethsemane was on a hill called the Mount of Olives, just outside the city of Jerusalem. It was a place which Jesus used to go to from time to time when he wanted to get some peace and quiet and to pray. The last time he went there was at night, when one of his disciples named Judas betrayed him to his enemies, who came to arrest him.

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. Grief and anguish came over him, and he said to them, "The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch with me."

He went a little farther on, threw himself face downwards on the ground, and prayed.

Jesus was still speaking when Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs and sent by the chief priests and the elders. The traitor had given the crowd a signal: "The man I kiss is the one you want. Arrest him!"

Judas went straight to Jesus and said, "Peace be with you, Teacher," and kissed him.

Matthew chapter 26 verses 36–39 and 47–48

Today, Christians from all over the world visit the site of the Garden of Gethsemane as part of their pilgrimages to the places associated with Jesus.



The garden still has olive trees in it, some of which are extremely old.



- 16** From the word list on page 13, choose another four words, this time to describe the Garden of Gethsemane as you see it in the picture above. You can use some of the same words again if you want to. Colour them in blue.

Now look at the list again, and choose four words to describe the Garden of Gethsemane as it was on the night when Jesus was arrested there. You can use some of the same words again if you want to. Colour them in green.

- 17** **Design an imaginary garden about either the Garden of Eden or the Garden of Gethsemane. You could include trees, grass, flowers, statues, ponds, rocks and other things which are found in gardens.**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a student to draw an imaginary garden.