

## The Secret Garden Book Project

# The SECRET GARDEN



### 'A GIFT TO THE SCHOOL - WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE GARDEN?'

This is a new CD-based resource developed for use in the Primary classroom.  
Written by SAPS and Field Studies Council.



For a number of years Science and Plants for Schools (SAPS, [www.saps.org.uk](http://www.saps.org.uk)) has been involved in the production of a series of booklets - *Plants for primary pupils* [1]. In their final booklet in the series (*Plants in their natural environment*), the authors indicated that they were also involved in the design of a separate resource, 'A gift to the school: what shall we do with the garden?'

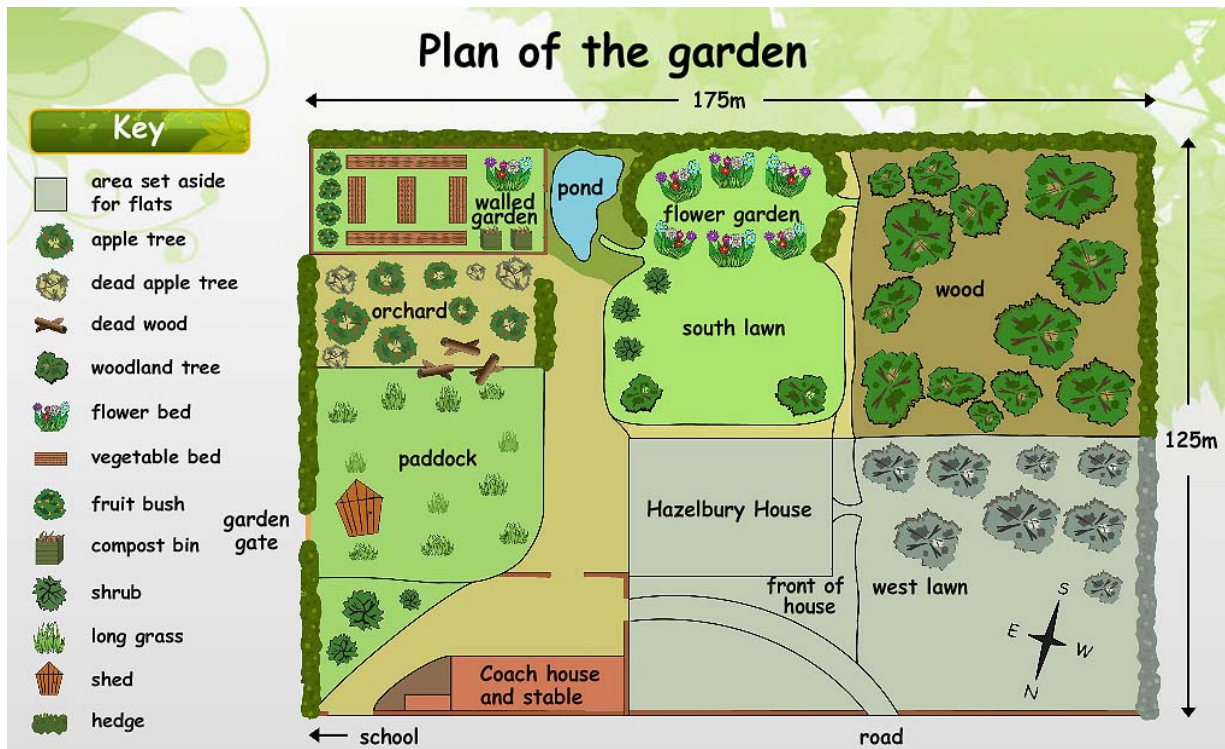
In this brief article we explore this new CD-based resource and consider how it might be used in the classroom.

An elderly lady lived at 'Hazelbury', a large (imaginary) house, next door to the school. The lady always took an interest in the school and gave a lot of support to school activities. She was a keen gardener and very interested in natural history.

When she died, her son decided to renovate the house and sell it, but he carried out his mother's wishes and bequeathed the garden as a 'gift to the school'. He wanted the children to decide what they would like to do with the different parts of the garden, ensuring that they took note of conservation issues and ways to learn about and maintain the wildlife in the garden.

The garden includes a paddock, an orchard, a walled garden, a pond, a flower garden and a wood.

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**Figure 1** - Plan of the garden at Hazelbury. On the CD the sections marked paddock, orchard, walled garden, pond, flower garden, and wood can be further explored.

For each section of the CD there is a set of Teacher Guidance notes which give background information and list possible ideas which the pupils may wish to explore or discuss in more detail. Ideas for pupils to consider include:

- *Who is responsible for the fence around the paddock? Should it be repaired? Who would do the repairs and how much would it cost? Think about work to be done on the walled garden and the orchard - it may be possible to share the costs for the repairs.*
- *Should the old shed be removed? What reasons can you think of for keeping it?*
- *Are there any signs of rabbits? What effects might they have on the paddock?*
- *Wild flower meadows are often rich in both animal and plant life. Could the paddock be kept as a wild flower meadow? What would you have to do to maintain it as a meadow?*
- *Would it be best to mow the grass and provide a good play area for the school?*

A Gift to the School - What shall we do with the garden?

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A range of science topics are covered and the authors have created a table to show where these are covered:

Science topic	Paddock	Orchard	Walled garden	Pond	Flower garden	Wood
Habitat diversity and variety of wildlife	➔	➔		➔	➔	➔
Adaptation	➔	➔		➔	➔	➔
Feeding relationships	➔	➔	➔	➔	➔	➔
Caring for the environment		➔	➔	➔	➔	➔
Life cycles	➔	➔	➔	➔	➔	➔
Pollination		➔	➔		➔	
Seed dispersal	➔	➔	➔		➔	➔
Photosynthesis	➔	➔	➔	➔	➔	➔
Decomposition		➔	➔	➔	➔	➔
Weather, climate and season		➔	➔		➔	➔
Healthy eating		➔	➔			

**Table 1** - In each of the garden areas, there are opportunities for discussion of different science topics.

Pupils are invited to decide how best to use the garden and to maintain different areas within it so as to encourage a diversity of wildlife. They undertake research to back up their proposals and practise negotiating skills to resolve conflicts that may arise. There are no predetermined or fixed outcomes for the debates and discussions, but rather pupils are encouraged to explore their ideas creatively, yet becoming aware of constraints that might interfere with their aspirations. Their work is undertaken in small groups and ideally would culminate in a presentation to an audience wider than their own class.



**Figure 2** - A caterpillar of the brown hairstreak butterfly protects itself from predators with its exquisite camouflage.

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**Figure 3** - Two crab spiders with prey. Can you spot the one in the right hand picture?

The CD has a wealth of images that help build up a picture of each garden area, of plants and animals that might be found there. It has interactive materials that allow pupils, for example, to discover what lies underneath a log, create a food chain, to reveal stages in the life cycle of moths or butterflies or watch a privet hawkmoth larva feeding.

Detailed guidance notes for teachers include descriptions of the garden in the past, what it is like today and ideas the pupils can explore. Teachers, and other adults who may be involved in helping, have further support from notes that give background information and some help with the science. Full guidance is given as to how teachers can work with the pupils.

The CD-ROM resource is available for purchase directly from SSERC at a cost of £25 (inclusive of VAT and postage).

For further information contact [Paul.Beaumont@sserc.org.uk](mailto:Paul.Beaumont@sserc.org.uk)

**References** [1] - All of the booklets are available as free downloads from the SAPS website – [www.saps.org.uk](http://www.saps.org.uk).

