



Outdoor Classroom Project Plan:

Construction Instructions for

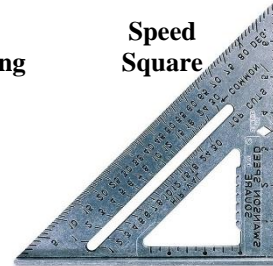
Large Songbird Sanctuary (with 4-sided Garden)

❖ Construction Tools & Supplies for Outdoor Classroom Build Day:

- (1) 20 ft Measuring Tape
- (1) Speed Square for measuring angles
- (4-6) Shovels (2-3 for adults; 2-3 for children)
- (1-2) Wheelbarrows for moving grass clumps, soil & mulch
- (24-30) 1-gallon milk jugs (with tops cut off but handles remaining) for students to move dirt, sand, soil, etc.
- 24-inch I-beam Level
- (4-6) Hand-held Trowels (for stirring soil amendments together)
- Water hose for watering plants at the end of day
- Saw for cutting 4" x 4" post into 6" pieces for Plant ID Signs
- Drill for attaching signs to posts
- Pick ax for removing large rocks if necessary
- Twine (40 ft long)
- (4) Garden Stakes or Flags
- (1) Can of Landscape Spray Paint
- Retaining Wall Blocks (12 in Long x 8 in Wide x 4 in Tall)
- Weed Fabric (6 ft x 15 ft)
- Soil (or components to create amended soil such as soil conditioner, cow manure, potting soil, etc.)



Measuring Tape



Speed Square



I-beam Level

❖ Construction & Planting Instructions:

- 1) Purchase supplies and have them on-hand for the Outdoor Classroom Build Day.
- 2) Decide where you want to plant your tree(s), bushes, &/or other plants, and place the plants in those locations. Spray-paint a circle twice the diameter of each plant's pot.
- 3) Plant the tree(s). See *Alabama Cooperative Extension Publication ANR-1405 for tree planting instructions*. (<https://ssl.acesag.auburn.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1405/ANR-1405-archive.pdf>)
 - A. Dig a hole 2-3 times the width of the root ball of the tree and three inches deeper than the height of the root ball.
 - B. Mix the soil that has been excavated with 1 bag of potting mix to create an enriched and aerated soil for the tree to grow in.
 - C. Loosen the soil at the bottom & sides of the hole, then add 3 inches of the enriched soil into the bottom of the hole.



❖ Construction & Planting Instructions (cont.):

- D. Remove the tree from the pot and loosen the roots by hand. If the roots wrap around the root ball, try to loosen them or cut them so that they can spread outward. If the tree is in a burlap ball, place the tree in the hole and then carefully cut the burlap bag and let it fall into the hole. The burlap will biodegrade with time.
 - E. Place the tree in the hole, making certain that the trunk of the tree is straight and not leaning to one side. The top of the root ball should be even with the ground or slightly higher by no more than an inch.
 - F. Fill the hole around the root ball with the enriched soil (1 bag of potting mix per tree), and then thoroughly soak it with a hose for 5-10 minutes.
 - G. Once it is saturated, slightly press your foot on the soil around the root ball to help stabilize the root ball and to remove potentially harmful air pockets in the soil.
 - H. Cover the area with 2-3 inches of mulch and water thoroughly twice a week for the first few months.
- 4) Plant the fruit-bearing & evergreen shrubs following the same steps as those for planting the tree (above) using ½ bag of potting mix per shrub or bush.
 - 5) Choose a spot for your bird feeder station(s) that is at least six feet from the closest tree or limb to help keep squirrels from jumping on the bird feeders. If possible, pick a location in front of a hall window where students can watch the birds. Install the bird feeder station(s) with shepherd hooks and a baffle half way up the pole.
 - 6) Fill the bird feeders with seed, suet, meal worms, fruit, etc., and then attach each bird feeder to a shepherd's hook.
 - 7) Install the bird bath and add water to the basin. Install the solar fountain. Select bird bath location at least 6 feet from trees and bushes so that predators such as house cats cannot ambush the birds in the bird bath.
 - 8) Choose locations for bird houses (or nesting boxes) that are as far apart as possible while still remaining in the outdoor classroom area. If you are installing multiple bluebird boxes, you will want to choose locations at least 50-100 yards apart, preferably so that bluebirds using the two nesting boxes cannot see each other.

Plant Your Tree Properly

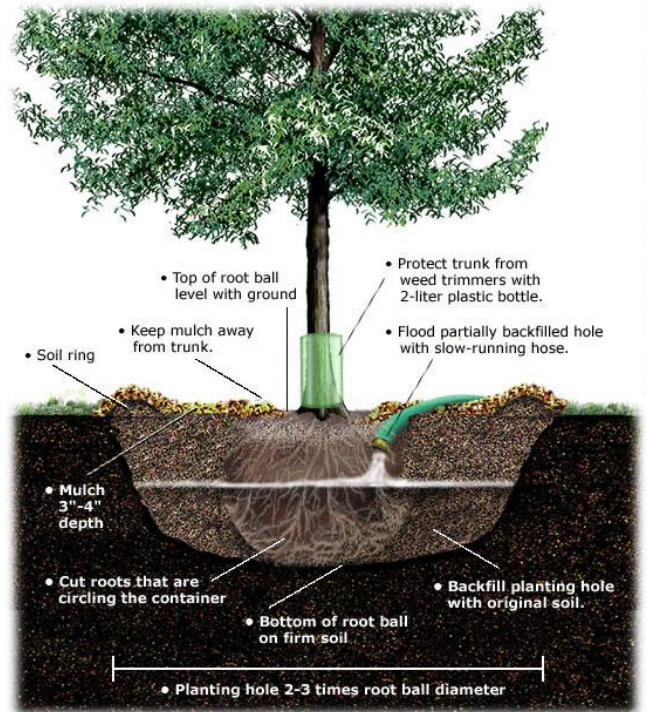


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❖ Construction & Planting Instructions (cont.):

9) Attach bird houses to top of 4" x 4"s. Install baffles. Dig 1-ft-deep hole to install 4" x 4"s one foot in the ground to stabilize the bird houses (or nesting boxes). Use concrete around the base of the 4"x4" in the hole if needed; if not, then pack dirt back in hole around the base of the 4" x 4".



10) To create the perimeter of your garden, begin by placing **Stake #1 (or flag)** in the ground where you want the first corner to be located.

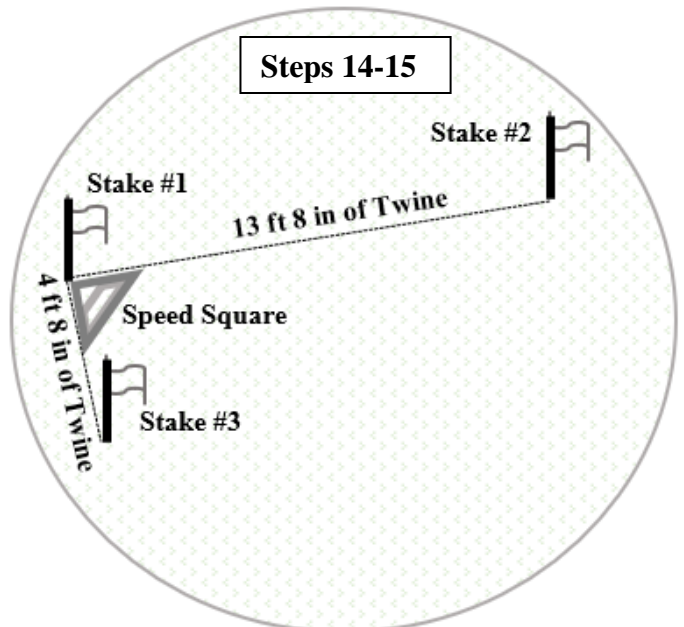
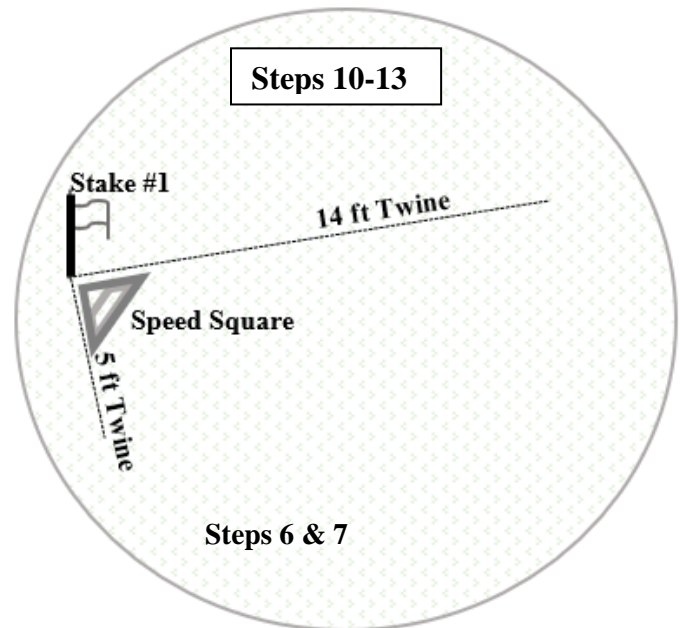
11) Place the **speed square** on the ground to measure the 90-degree angle needed for the inside of the first corner of your garden.

12) Cut the **twine** into two pieces that are 5 ft long and two pieces that are 14 ft long.

13) Tie the end of a 5 ft piece of twine and the end of a 14 ft piece of twine to Stake #1. (See diagram on right)

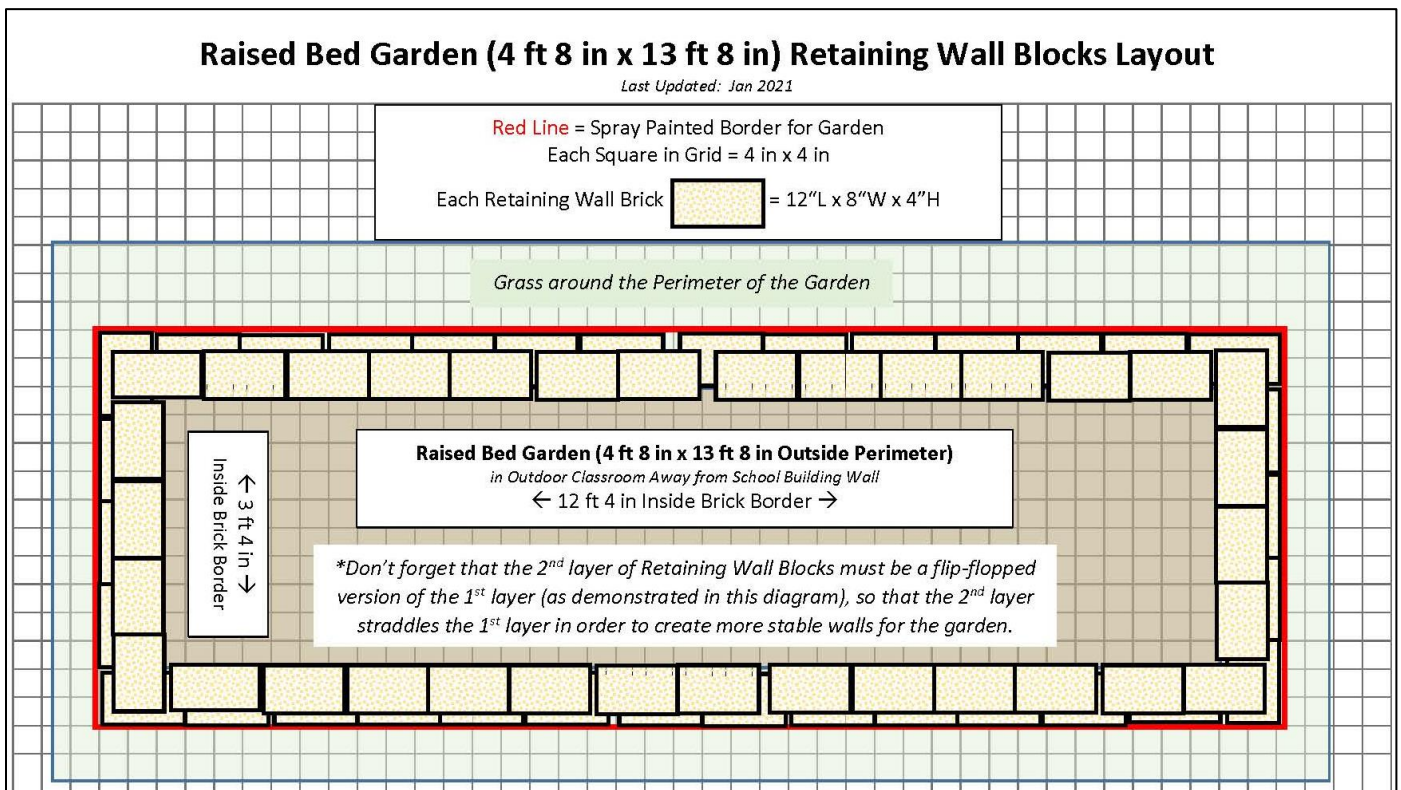
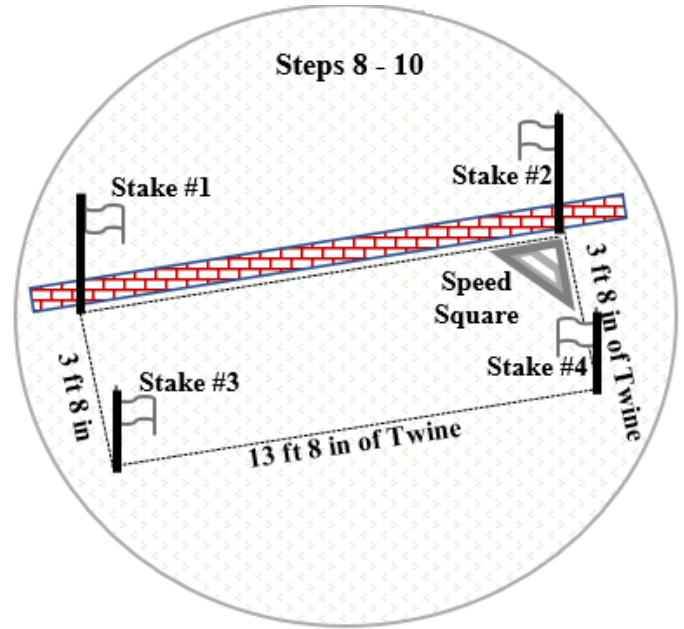
14) Place the end of the **measuring tape** at Stake #1, and follow the edge of the speed square as you measure out 13 ft 8 in to create the first long-side of the garden. Place **Stake #2** in the ground to mark the second corner. Make sure that the measuring tape stays straight and follows the outer edge of the speed square, so that the first corner forms a 90-degree angle. Pull the 14 ft long piece of twine from Stake #1 to Stake #2, and tie the end of it to Stake #2 to create a straight line.

15) Place the end of the measuring tape at Stake #1 again, and then follow the opposite edge of the speed square as you measure out 4 ft 8 in. Place **Stake #3** in the ground to create the first short-side of the garden. Make sure that the measuring tape stays straight and follows the outer edge of the speed square, so that the first corner continues to form a 90-degree angle. Pull the 5 ft long piece of twine from Stake #1 to Stake #3, and tie the end of it to Stake #3 to create a straight line.



❖ Construction & Planting Instructions (cont.):

- 16) Next place the speed square on the ground by Stake #2 to determine the 90-degree angle needed for the inside of the second corner of your garden.
- 17) Place the end of the measuring tape at Stake #2, and follow the opposite edge of the speed square as you measure out 4 ft 8 in. Place **Stake #4** in the ground to mark the third corner. Make sure that the measuring tape stays straight, so that the second corner continues to form a 90-degree angle. Pull the 5 ft long piece of twine from Stake #2 to Stake #4, and tie the end of it to Stake #4 to create a straight line.
- 18) Next, tie one end of the remaining 14 ft piece of twine to Stake #4 and the other end to Stake #3. This should create 90-degree angles in the third and fourth corners, and you can use your speed square to confirm this.
- 19) Lastly spray paint straight lines along the ground following the **OUTSIDE** of the garden perimeter that was created by the twine. (*See diagram below*)

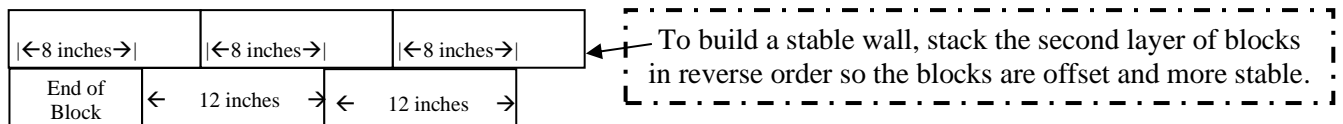




Example Large Songbird Sanctuary (with 4-sided garden) Construction Instructions

❖ Construction & Planting Instructions (cont.):

- 20) Dig and remove the grass in a path that is 1 inch deep and 8 inches wide along the **INSIDE** of the spray-painted garden perimeter to create a base on which to place the retaining wall blocks. Use your shovel/trowel to create a flat surface for the base to keep the retaining wall blocks level.
- 21) Place the first retaining wall block in a corner with the 12-inch length of the block starting along one of the long sides (13 ft 8 in long). Use your I-beam level to make sure the block is level from side-to-side and front-to-back. Add a little dirt or sand and use your trowel to level the base surface if needed. Place the next block directly next to the first one, and use your level to make sure that the second block is level with the first block. Continue adding blocks until you have placed and leveled thirteen blocks (13 ft) in a row. You should have 8 inches of base surface remaining without a block.
- 22) Place a retaining wall block at the end of your first side but place it perpendicular to the other blocks so that the 8-inch width of the new block fills in the final 8 inches of the first side of the garden. Use your I-beam level to make sure the new block is level and adjust it if needed. Continue adding blocks until you have placed and leveled four blocks (4 ft) in a row. You should have 8 inches remaining in the second side of your garden without a block.
- 23) Place a block perpendicularly at the end of the second side of your garden, so that the 8-inch width of the new block fills in the final 8 inches of the second side. Use your I-beam level to make sure the new block is level and adjust it if needed. Place and level twelve more blocks, leaving the remaining 8 inches of the third side of the garden without a block.
- 24) Lastly, place a block perpendicularly at the end of the third side of your garden, so that the 8-inch width of the new block fills in the final 8 inches of the third side. Use your I-beam level to make sure the new block is level and adjust it if needed. Place and level three more blocks to create the fourth and final side of the garden. The first level of your garden is completed.
- 25) Place the landscape fabric (weed barrier) on the grass inside the garden area, push the fabric against the insides of the retaining wall blocks, and lay the edges of the fabric on top of the blocks so that the fabric is sandwiched and held in place between the first and second layers of retaining wall blocks. If your fabric is not wide enough to cover the insides of the block and have the edge of the fabric lay on top of the block, then you need to make your garden a little smaller (less wide).
- 26) Next, start laying the second layer of blocks from the same corner that you started in for the first layer of blocks, but in reverse order (counter-clockwise). Lay the end of first block on 8 inches of the first block from the first layer, pointing it in other direction. The second layer of retaining wall blocks should straddle the first layer to create more stable walls for your garden. (*See example below.*)

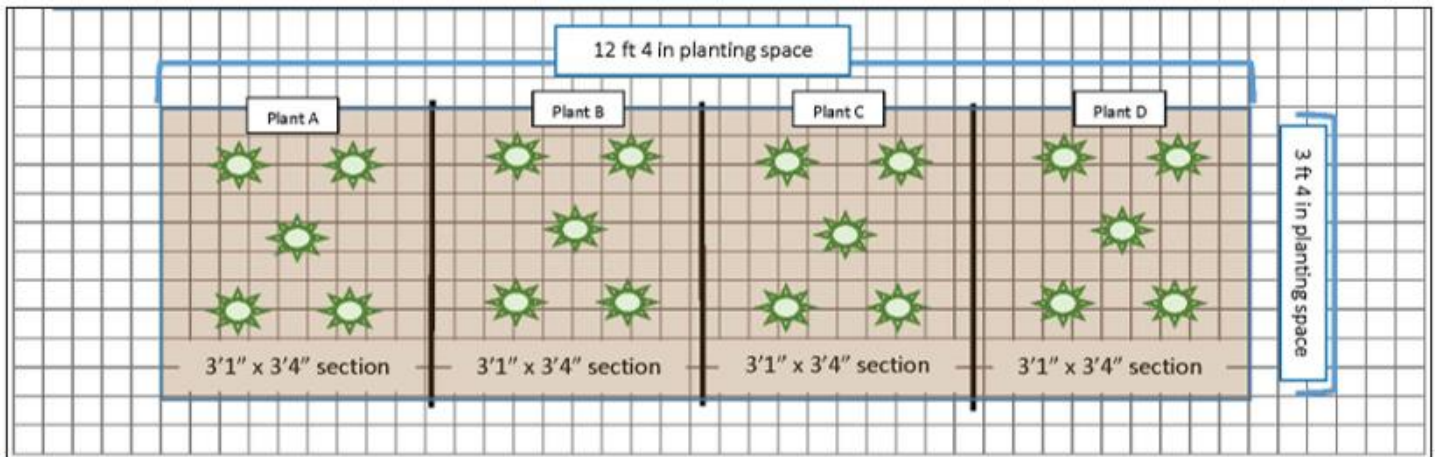




Example Large Songbird Sanctuary (with 4-sided garden) Construction Instructions

❖ Construction & Planting Instructions (cont.):

- 27) Fill the bottom of the garden with top soil, add the compost and manure, and then add the potting soil and soil conditioner to retain moisture in the soil. Use trowels to turn and mix the soils.
- 28) Install 3 ft dividers of the landscape edging inside the garden to create (4) 3 ft 1 in x 3 ft 4 in planting sections—each section for a different plant species. (see the lines | in the diagrams below)



- 29) Plant the flowers, grouping each of the different species of plants together within each square.
- 30) Add 1 inch of mulch around the plantings throughout the garden, and water thoroughly.
- 31) Cut (1) 4" x 4" x 6' into (12) 6" pieces. Use the Speed Square to cut one end of each 6" piece at a 40-50-degree angle to create a slanted top for your Plant ID signs.
- 32) Attach each Plant ID sign to the slanted tops of the 4" x 4" x 6" pieces (using screws or adhesive). Sink the bottom of the posts a few inches into the ground in front of the appropriate plant species grouping.
- 33) Dig a 1-ft deep hole near the garden for your education sign, place the other 4"x4"x6' post in the hole, use concrete to secure the post in the hole and around the base of the post to prevent water from collecting and rotting post. Attach educational sign to post.
- 34) Water all of the new plantings thoroughly.

