

Frequently Asked Questions Childhood's Gate Children's Garden

Is the children's garden appropriate for a particular age range?

The garden was designed to primarily engage children of ages 3–12 but we think you will find that it is appropriate for the “child at heart” of all ages! Our garden should be explored by children and adults together.

Is there a fee to enter the children's garden?

No. Admission to all areas of the Arboretum is free of charge.

Does the children's garden offer programs for my child?

In the summer season we offer informal garden learning opportunities and special programs. Every weekday from mid-June until mid-October there are drop-in activities available from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. Each month a calendar of special programs offered during that month is posted on our website and in the gardens. There are also special events in the fall—Pumpkin Festival and Winter Celebration. Please check our website for updates.

May I bring my stroller into the children's garden?

Yes.

May children ride bikes in the children's garden?

Bikes, scooters or other wheeled vehicles are not permitted in the H.O. Smith Botanic Gardens or in the children's garden.

Is the children's garden wheelchair-accessible?

Yes.

May I bring food and drink into the children's garden?

No, we ask that you not bring food and beverages (other than bottled water) into the any part of the H.O. Smith Botanic Gardens. There are cafes located in campus buildings close to the garden and we can direct you to those locations. There is also a public park (Sunset Park) at the end of McKee Street in the adjacent neighborhood where you may enjoy a picnic. You can read about many other public parks in the State College area where picnicking is allowed at <https://www.crpr.org/find-your-park>.

May I drop off my child in the children's garden?

No. In the children's garden and throughout the Arboretum, all children who are 12 years old and under must be in the company of an adult who is responsible for their supervision at all times. In addition, we recommend a ratio of one adult to every five children within Childhood's Gate.

When is Childhood's Gate open for visitation?

As with all areas in the H.O. Smith Botanic Gardens, visitors to the children's garden are welcome every day from dawn until dusk.

Will there be staff on site in the children's garden?

While educational activities are frequently conducted in the garden by employees, student interns, and volunteers, we cannot guarantee that staff will be on site at all times.

Do I need to call in advance if I am bringing a group of children?

Yes! Organizers of groups of 10 children or more should notify our tour coordinator so that we are aware of your planned visit and can help you to have an enjoyable experience. Please contact Kelly Oleynik at keo5114@psu.edu to plan a tour or schedule a group presence in the garden, or complete our [Group Visit Inquiry Form](#) and submit it on line.

Should I bring a swimsuit for my child as I understand there are water features in the garden?

There are several water features within Childhood's Gate. While it is expected that children will be attracted to these, we remind you that the garden is not a playground or park. Swimming or wading is not permitted in the entry pools or Spring Basin within the entry court. Water play is available via our farm pump and trough and through the In and Out Creek area.

There are many rock features in the garden. Will my child be free to climb anywhere?

The rocks and sculpture features in the garden are part of the learning landscape. It is not safe to climb on the Limestone Cave, Discovery Tree (or real trees), large boulders, planters, masonry, and other high points in the garden. Please remind your child that Childhood's Gate is a *garden*. There are many local parks and recreation areas with spaces designed for climbing and very active play.

How are the vegetables and herbs utilized in the children's garden?

Our vegetables, herbs, flowers and fruit are used for educational programs and informal learning under the guidance of our garden staff. We also donate our harvest to the State College Food Bank on a weekly basis in the summer and early fall.

Are there other guidelines or rules for the children's garden?

Yes! Thank you for asking. Please read the [Childhood's Gate Children's Garden Guidelines](#).

The garden is a highly visited space and we want everyone to enjoy their experiences at Childhood's Gate Children's Garden. To this end, our staff will intervene if they observe behavior that endangers the safety of visitors or negatively impacts the experience of other garden guests.