**Garden Buildings Activity**

**Activity outline:**

This activity is intended to introduce children to the concept of ornamental garden buildings used as features in historic designed landscapes.

It is designed to take 20 mins, with a group of up to 30 children.

c4 adult helpers will be needed in addition to the group leader.

It is most appropriate for KS1-2.

It was piloted outdoors in a historic landscape, sitting on the location of a lost garden building, but could equally be run in front of or inside a surviving building.

**Equipment and materials:**

* Waterproof-backed rug (c4 rugs for 30 children)
* Plasticine (perhaps 1 travel pack per child, otherwise a bulk pack is fine)
* Lego (perhaps c15 pieces per child)
* Images of historic garden buildings - ideally printed in colour on A4 paper and laminated.
* Multiple copies of an image of the ‘host’ garden building.
* You may wish to consider a gazebo to protect from poor weather.

Cost: c£20 for 30 children, depending on whether new Lego and rugs need to be bought.

**Risk Assessment:**

* Ensure volunteers, especially if without a DBS check, are not left alone with children.
* Tripping over rugs – do not permit running or careless movement.
* Sickness from digesting plasticine – do not permit plasticine in the mouth.
* Swallowing Lego – monitor behaviour.
* Fighting over Lego and plasticine – monitor behaviour, ensure adequate supplies and appropriate sharing.
* Standing on Lego – ensure shoes are worn.
* NB this risk assessment should be in addition to the site assessment and for any wider event.

**Method:**

*5 minutes talking:*

* Remember to speak loudly and clearly.
* Introduce yourself.
* “We are going to be learning a little bit about the kind of buildings that people often made in their gardens as decoration. Gardens are not just about flowers and plants!”
* People have created unusual buildings to decorate their gardens for hundreds and hundreds of years. We’re not just talking about sheds!
* Here at X there was a building in DATE that was used for X. It was [DESCRIBE].”
* Hand around copies of drawings of the building. [Obviously if the building still exists you can show it to the group.]
* When the group settles down again you can talk about other types of garden building:
* “sometimes garden owners made buildings just to look interesting, but sometimes they were to have picnics in, to pretend to be a dairymaid in (dairymaids were the girls who made cheese … can you imagine rich people pretending to make cheese?!), or to pretend that hermits or witches lived in.”
* Show your pictures of garden buildings one at a time. Hold each picture up to the group and describe what it is and what it shows (name, date, appearance, purpose), then after each picture pass it into the group.
* “Now we’re going to have a quick go at designing our own garden buildings – I’m interested to see what you’d do as 21st century garden users!”

*5 minutes set up:*

* Explain that in a minute they are going to split into 4 groups. Those in 2 of the groups will design individual tiny garden buildings using plasticine. Those in the other 2 will design individual tiny garden buildings using Lego. Explain that we will try to take photos of all the buildings. [If you have bought individual packs of plasticine for each child, those using plasticine can take them home, and we’ll give packs of plasticine to the Lego gang too so they can try at home.]
* Split the group into 4, give each a rug to spread out and ask them to move away from each other.
* Give plasticine to 2 of the groups (1 pack per child, or a suitable mound if you haven’t got individual packs), and Lego to the other 2.

*10 minutes making and photographing:*

* Circulate amongst the groups and encourage them to build.
* Make sure Lego is shared fairly.
* Show the pictures for inspiration.
* As models start to be completed, photograph them.
* Discourage children from getting up and running around.
* Emphasise the end of the activity by assembly everyone for a group photo with their models.

The Historic Landscape Project, 2020

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