

DESIGN ACCESSIBILITY FOR PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Introduction

Plan the garden so that it may be easily accessed and used by children and adults with all types of physical challenges. Paths to the garden must have a firm smooth surface so that persons using wheelchairs, walkers or crutches may travel to the garden. A level path without steps is best. If the access route is on a slope, ramps must be graded in accordance with standards in the Americans with Disabilities Act (A.D.A.).

Paving material should allow for good traction. If the garden is fenced, gates must be wide enough for easy access and equipped with A.D.A. approved latching devices. Designers should consult with the school district's facilities department for assistance with A.D.A. regulations. Plan paths inside the garden wide enough to allow persons in wheelchairs, on crutches or using walkers to move around. Three feet is considered minimum width for one-way traffic. Four-foot wide paths will allow wheelchairs to make ninety-degree turns. Five-foot wide paths will allow wheelchairs to make one-hundred-eighty-degree turns without backing up.

Curved designs make paths easier to use. Edge guides help keep wheelchairs, canes, walkers, and crutches from going off the paths.

Incorporate a sensory garden into the garden design. This allows visually impaired persons to enjoy fragrances, shapes, textures and tastes of fruits, vegetables, and flowers.

Here are structures to make gardens more accessible to the physically challenged: