

February 18, 2013

Dear Mayor and Councilmen:

The enclosed papers together with sketches explain a proposed "Kinder Garden" project by Master Gardeners; to be constructed at our local U. T. Research and Education Center on Highway 70 North. Master Gardeners is a volunteer group.

We are requesting \$5000.00 to initiate this valuable youth program, designed to reach children from age one to seven, and serve as an introduction to nature and our environment. It is purposed to get the children interested in the outdoors and to whet interest in nature. Later an expansion might be added for older children. These projects can cost from \$5000.00 to \$10,000.00 designed according to available funding.

To our knowledge there is no program of this type elsewhere in our region and possible in our State, while universities in other states are promoting this idea.

We would appreciate your placing us on your agenda for your next regular meeting and giving our request your careful consideration.

Beth Morgan, Master Gardener  
Kinder Garden Project Chairman  
Phone 931-707-8167

On the following pages you will learn about an exciting project being developed in Cumberland County by members of the Cumberland County Master Gardeners Association.

We're calling this project the Kinder Garden. The development of the Kinder Garden will provide hands-on opportunities for preschool and early elementary-aged children to play and learn in the natural environment.

On the next page you'll learn the importance of developing this Kinder Garden, and where it will be located. The several pages after that will provide more detail about the Garden itself. The Kinder Garden will include several major structures organized within eight areas, represented on the plan drawing. These garden areas have been designed to address specific play and learning needs. Each area will be explained briefly, followed by a simple artist's rendering of the area. These pictures are accurate representations of our basic design, while some minor details will necessarily change as we build the Garden.

On the final page you will find contact information if you would like to know more about the Kinder Garden, or would like to inquire about making a donation toward the development of this unique facility.

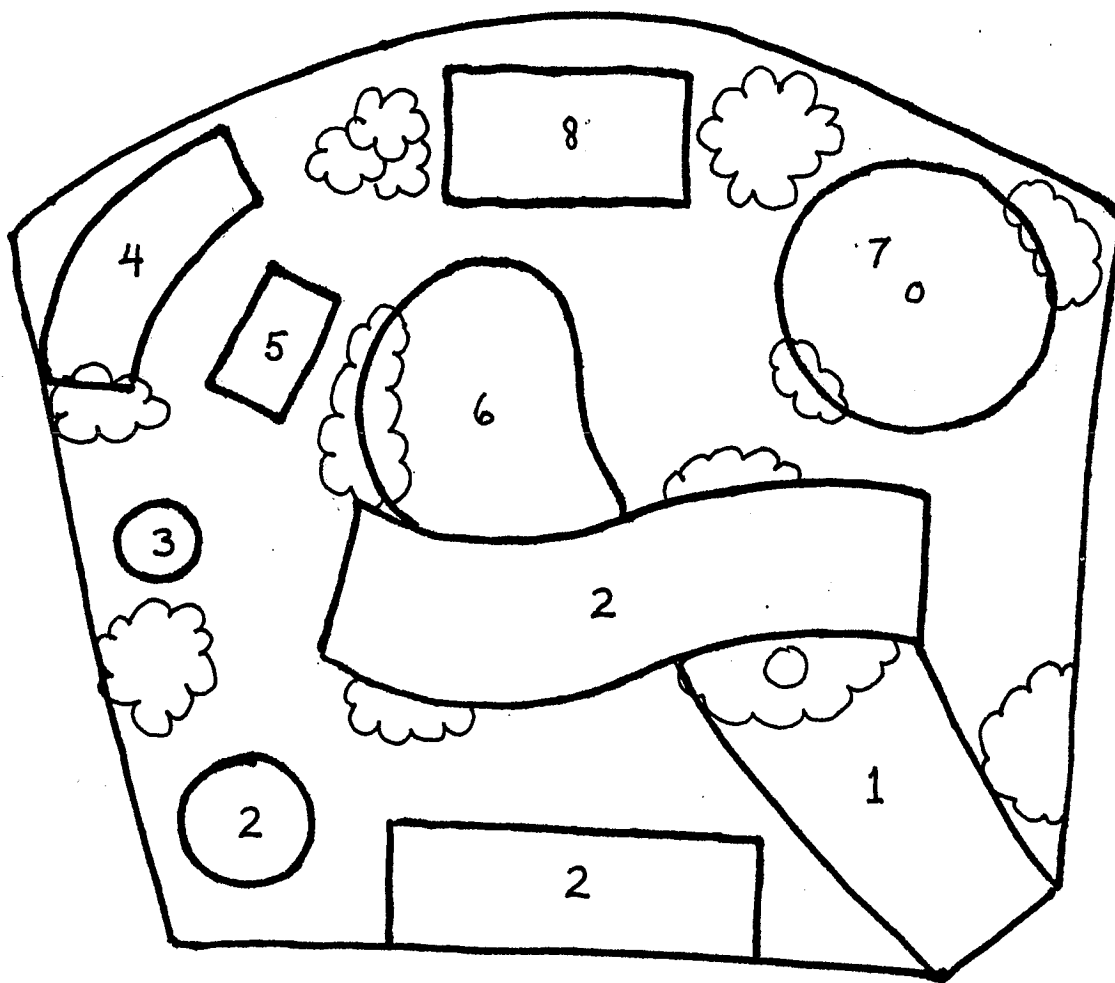
## Welcome to the Kinder Garden

The work of a child is simple - PLAY. Play is that dynamic, ever-changing process that stimulates the whole brain, not just a specific area related to a formal academic skill. It is multi-sensory, interactive, imaginative. Play facilitates physical and sensory-motor development as children run, jump, and climb. It promotes social learning through interactions with other children by creating roles based on what is observed in the world around them. It supports emotional growth as children project their own fears and ambitions. It supports cognitive development as children examine, compare, and evaluate the materials and opportunities available. In summary, play serves as a medium between what is possible and what is actual. When children play, imagination (things merely possible) is mixed with reality (contents of the real world), and through creative play, children bring into their world something spontaneous, novel and unique.

So why is it important that children work/play within the natural environment? "Nature learning" encompasses both the spontaneous and also intentional learning experiences that occur when children interact within the natural environment, whether on their own or with the assistance of adults. Research has proven that children grow healthier, wiser, and more content when they are more fully connected, throughout their childhood, to the natural environment in as many settings as possible (National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education). As children are exposed to the natural world, they grow to understand that nature does matter. Young children cannot experience these lessons by remaining indoors. Being told how a plant grows is never the same as digging in the soil, planting a seed, pouring a little water, and watching it daily for signs of growth. Interacting within the natural environment serves as an opportunity to investigate the world around them.

While there are many children's gardens throughout the United States, none are within a reasonable commute for residents of Cumberland and surrounding counties. The Cumberland County Master Gardener Association wants to bring this opportunity to children in and around our area. We have researched and visited nationally recognized children's gardens. We have designed a children's garden based upon recommended best practices. And...we have the perfect location identified and approved. One area of the Plateau Discovery Gardens (our demonstration garden overseen by Cumberland County Master Gardeners and located within the UT Plateau Research and Education Center), has been chosen specifically for a children's garden. This is open 365 days of the year during sunlight hours, and is free of charge to anyone visiting.

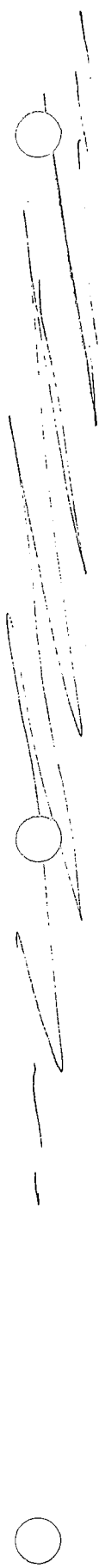
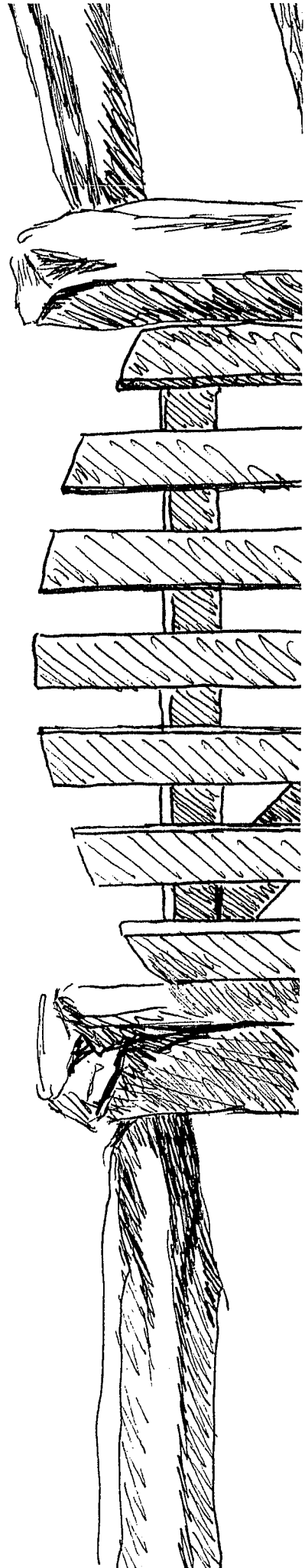
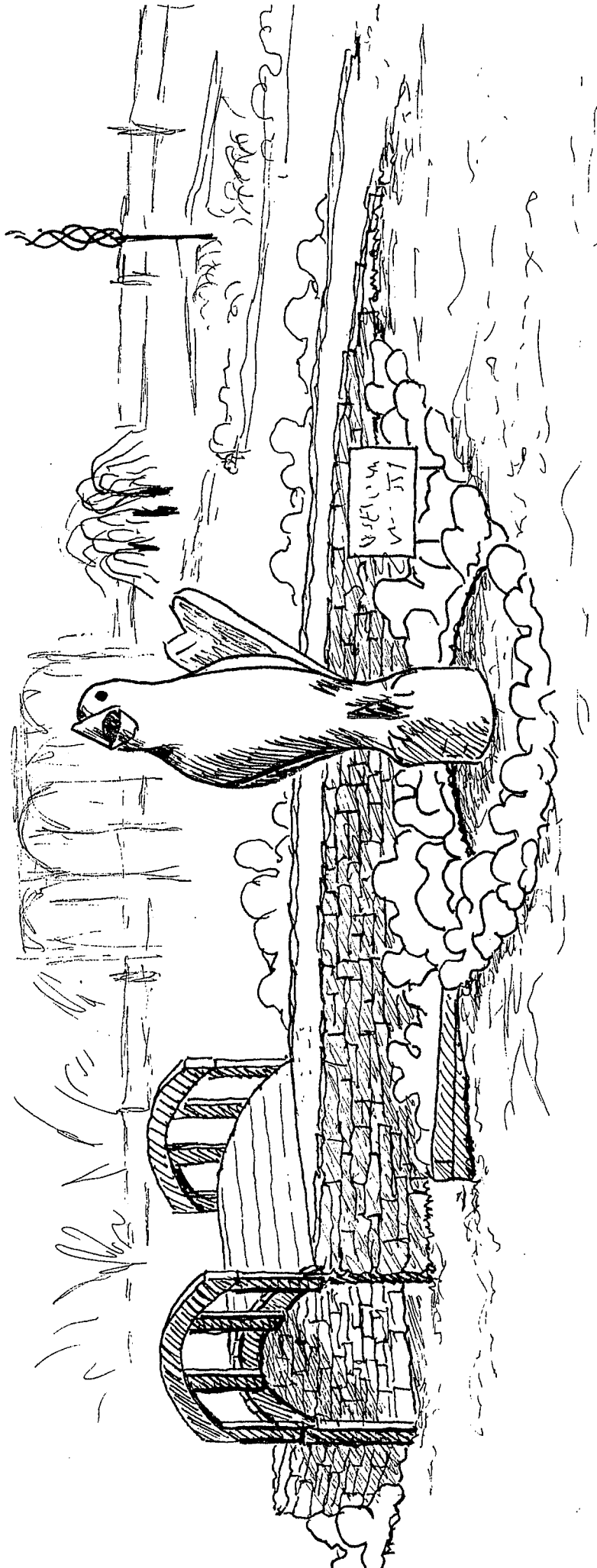
## Basic Plan of the Kinder Garden



1. Welcome Area
2. Green Tunnel, Log Fort and Bridge Road
3. Art and Construction
4. Music Area
5. Movement and Gathering Area
6. Potting, Digging and Water Area
7. Labyrinth
8. Pavilion

## Welcome Area

The purpose of the welcome area is to set the tone for the garden adventure by providing a visual clue signaling that children are entering a special place. Having this special entry also helps children stop and focus attention onto the variety of opportunities within the garden space. The Mockingbird (Tennessee's State Bird) has been chosen as the mascot to Kinder Garden, and will be represented by a wooden carving located within the gated entrance. The perimeter fencing signifies the safe space for the children.



## Green Tunnel, Log Fort and Bridge Road Areas

These areas provide an opportunity for children to develop gross motor skills, body awareness, motor planning and cooperative and imaginative play skills by crawling, climbing and navigating pathways. These are great ways to provide proprioceptive stimulation (input to muscles and joints), a sensory experience, and a way to challenge balance skills.

The green tunnel will be made of a metal framework. Fast-growing vines (such as beans, gourds or morning glories) will serve as the ceiling and walls, thus allowing children to visually examine plants from all angles. Light will filter into the tunnel through "windows" and open areas in the plantings. The tunnel will also serve as a calming place for children who may become overly stimulated.

The log fort will be just that - a circular structure made of peeled and smoothed logs, with two entrances. Along the interior walls there will be graduated "steps", made of log sections, to provide a climbing and balance play opportunity.

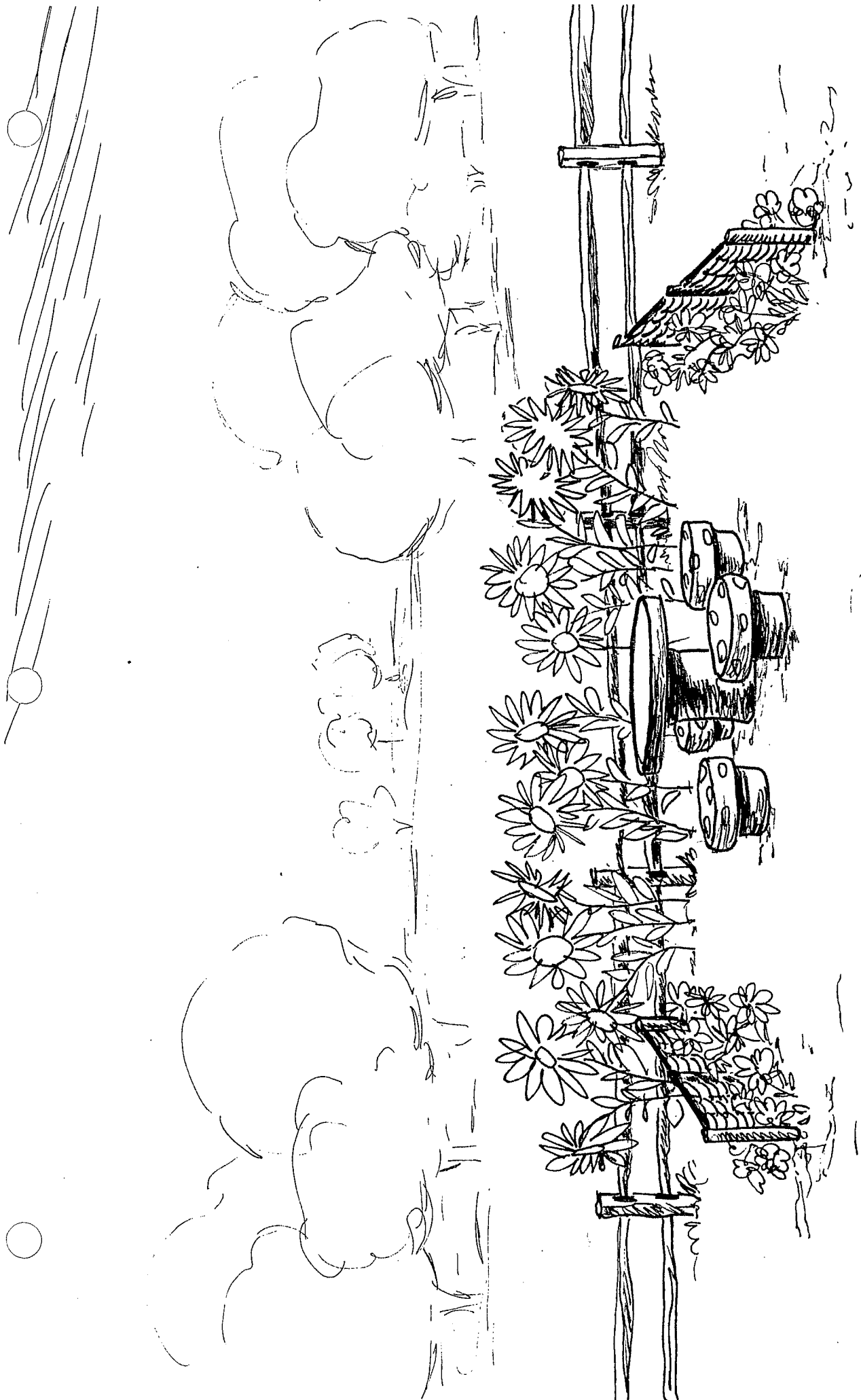
The bridge road will be approximately 5-6 feet wide, constructed of stone walls with fill dirt between and wood mulch on top. The path along the top will consist of "stepping stones" made of cross-section slices from large logs. This road will provide children with an opportunity to explore their surroundings by making decisions about how to access the garden areas. They can negotiate the path along the top of the road to reach another area of the garden, or pass under the tunnel, or simply run around the road structure.





## Art and Construction Area

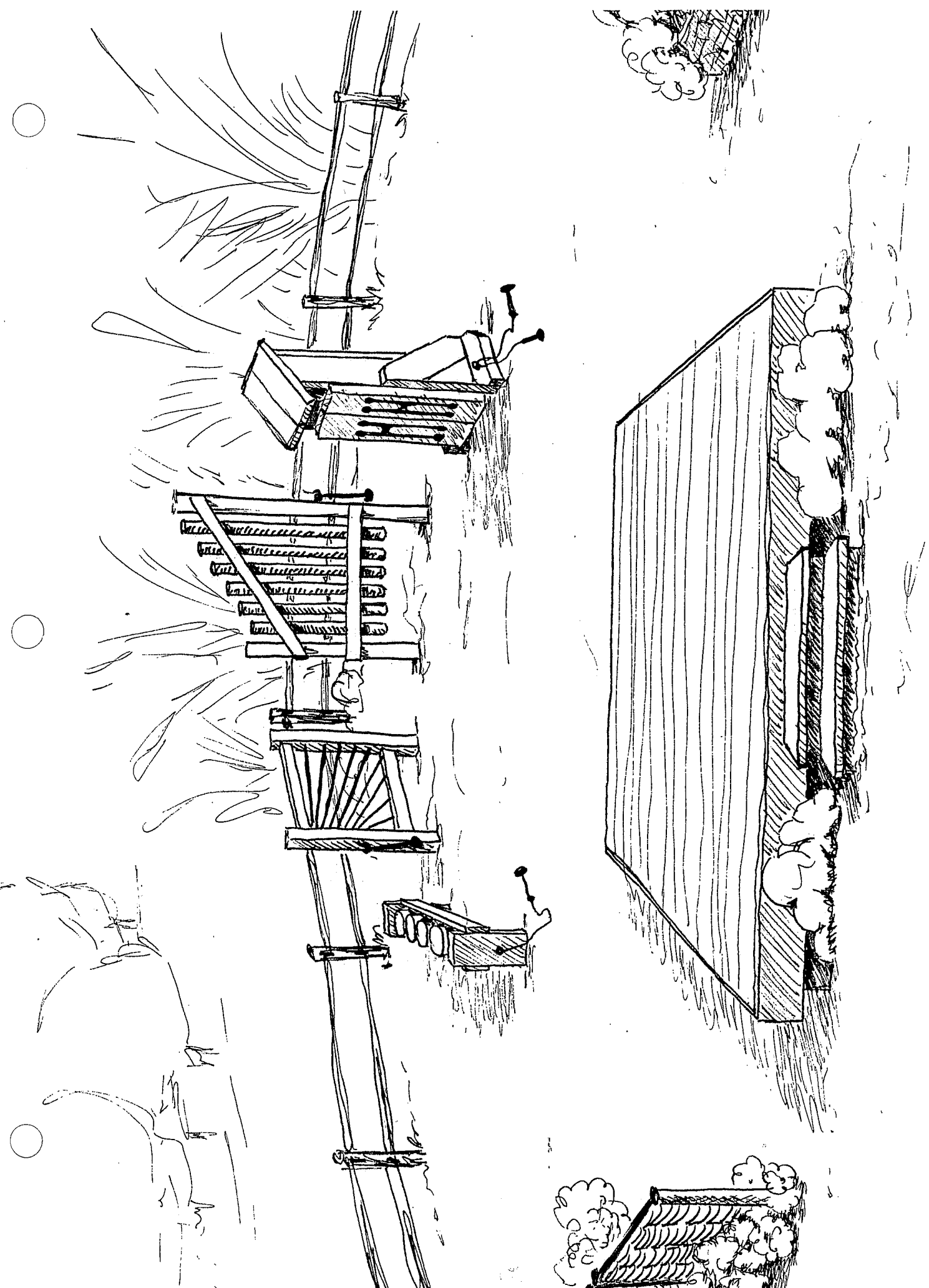
The nature art and construction area provides children the opportunity to use materials within nature to create patterns and works of art. As children work with natural materials such as sticks, pine cones and leaves, and arrange them into patterns or mosaic-like pictures, they strengthen eye-hand coordination, develop close observation skills, classification skills, and a sense of appreciation for the beauty of the natural world. As children handle these materials, they also gain an understanding of weight, mass, texture and shape. This is also a wonderful link to written literacy activities for some children. Included in this area will be storage for materials such as paper, pencils, clipboards, clay, chalk, watercolor paints, as well as natural materials such as feathers, rocks, small sticks and leaves. An outdoorsy table and chair station will be provided.



## Music and Movement/Gathering Areas

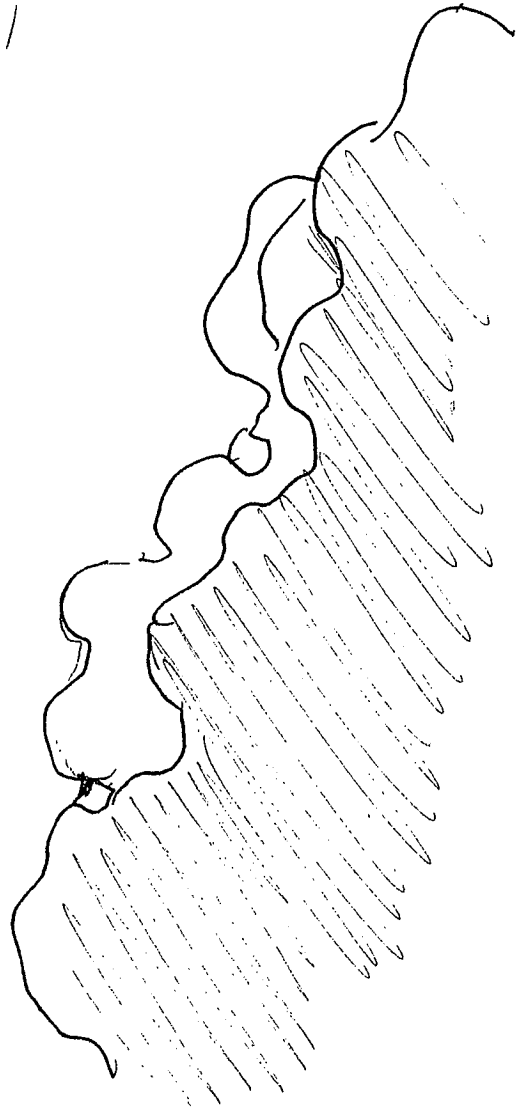
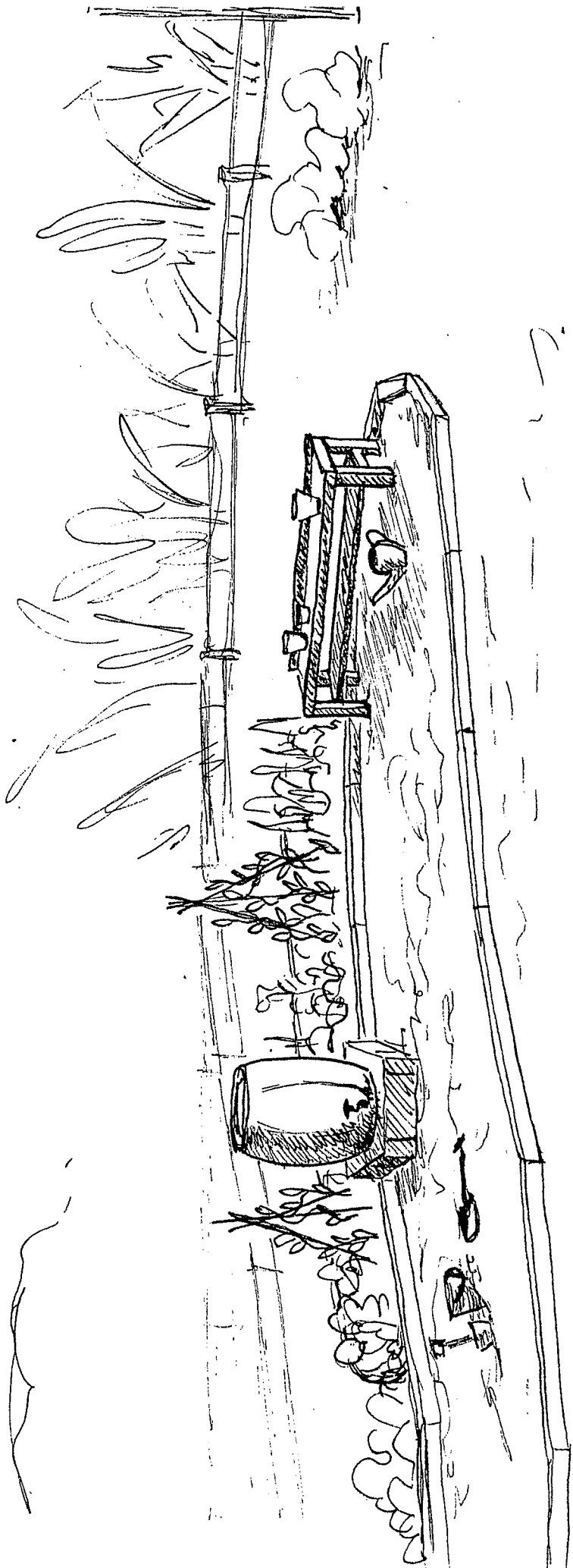
Well-equipped music areas allow children to independently learn about sound, pitch, rhythm and tonality, to manipulate a variety of musical instruments, and to experience concepts related to physics. Using musical instruments made from natural plant materials allows children the opportunity to experience the richness of nature and to learn about cultures world-wide where these instruments are commonly used. Included in the music area would be larger instruments such as tongue-drums, marimbas and chimes, as well as smaller instruments such as rain sticks, gourd shakers, etc.

A deck-like structure will serve as both a movement and gathering space. An open area which encourages dance in an unstructured way allows for creativity and improvisation. Nature inspires creative movement with the rich patterns found in trees and plants, insects and animals, wind, water and weather. Used as the gathering area, this space will give parents and teachers a meeting place to share their individual discoveries and the learning that has occurred. Special events such as group sing-a-longs, story-telling sessions, or visits from resource contacts can take place in this area as well.



## Potting, Digging and Water Area

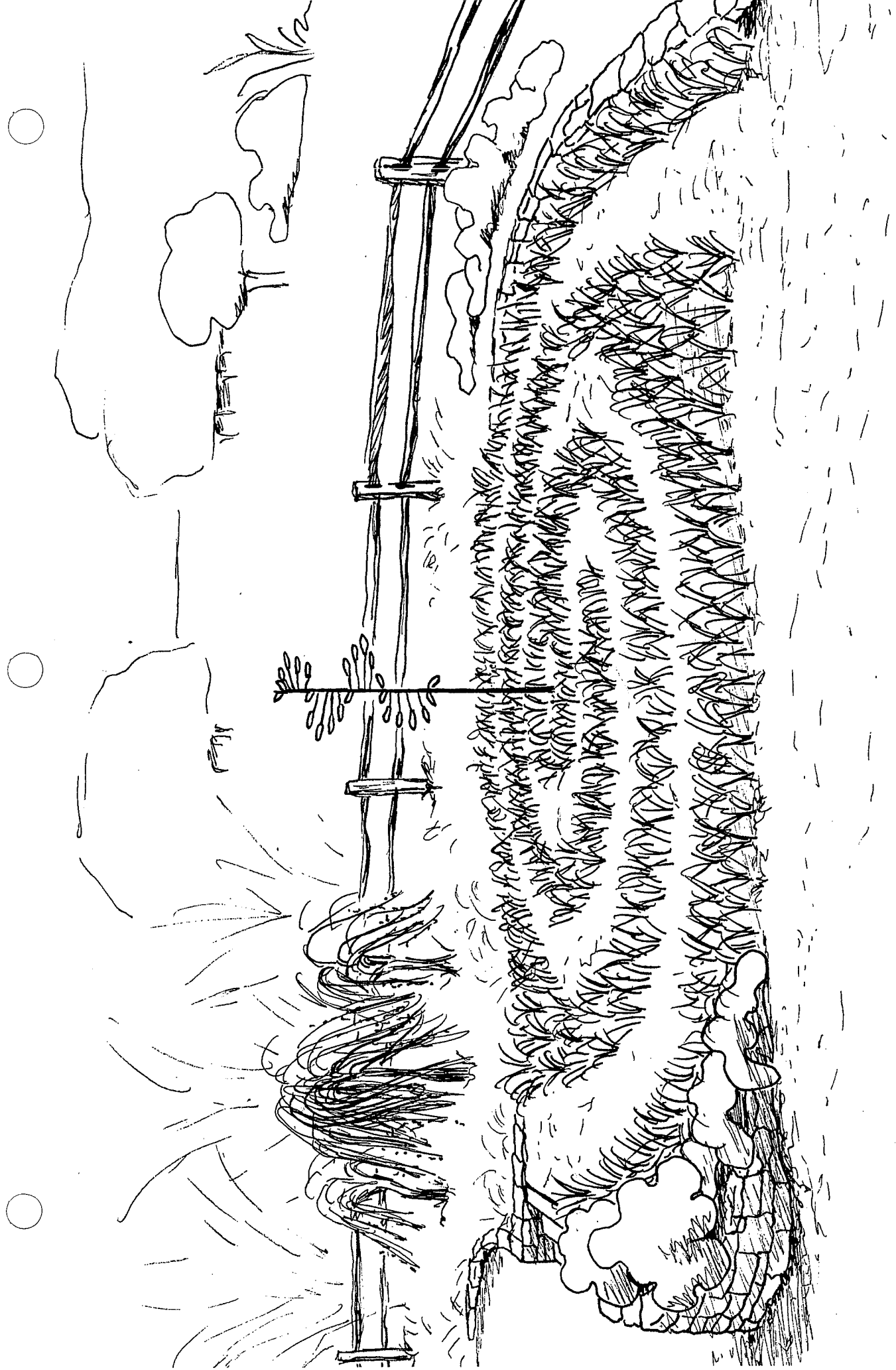
Interacting with natural vegetation encourages children to connect with natural systems and seasons while developing keen observation skills. The water source (a rain barrel) will provide the opportunity to experience and change the flow of water, observe water currents and, very importantly, to learn the importance of water as our plants grow. When children are able to help plant, care for and harvest a garden, they learn a sense of responsibility, and often develop increased appreciation for eating fresh produce. Experiencing the rich feeling and aroma of soil can be calming for children and adults. These experiences will be provided at the child-sized potting bench. Seeds and seedlings planted are allowed to be taken home or, for those children who do not have access to a garden area, a mini-garden will be provided so they can plant their seed in the Kinder Garden. These plants will be tended by Kinder Garden volunteers, and children and their families will be encouraged to return to watch the children's plants grow.



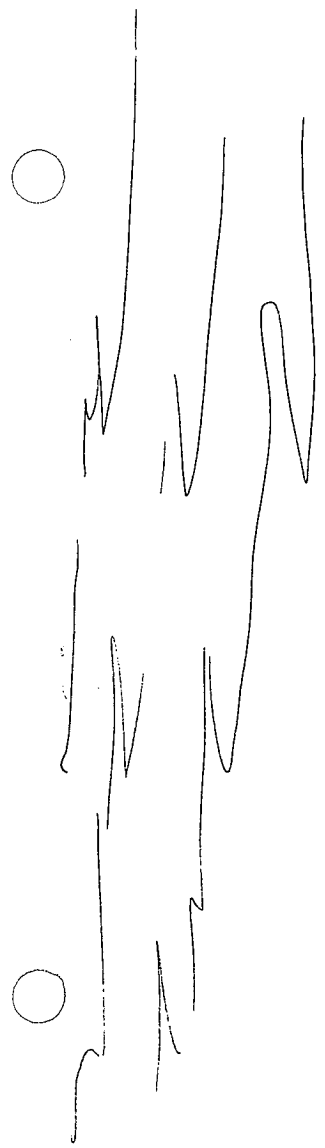
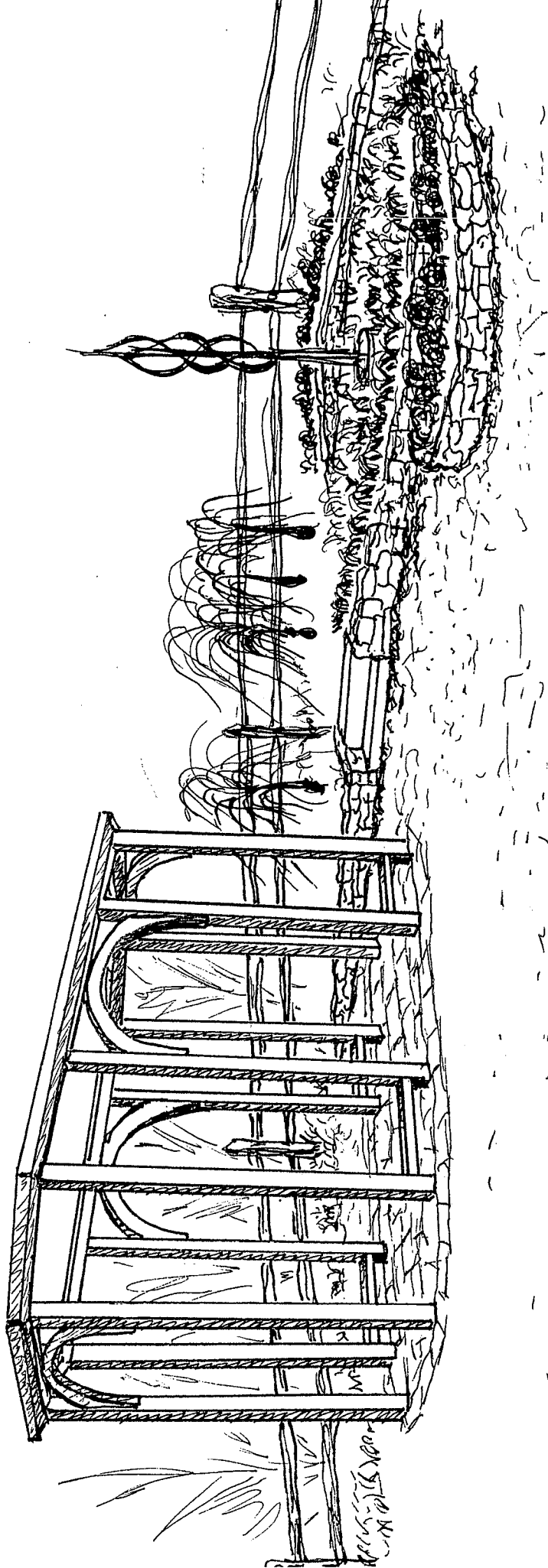
## Labyrinth and Pavilion Areas

A labyrinth is a wonderful creature, a single pathway leading the child into its center and out again. Unlike the problem-solving skills needed to solve a maze, there are no decisions to make, no anxiousness that accompanies deciding which way to go, no self-criticism that one has taken a "wrong" turn. Instead, the children travel the path with a sense of surety that they will be taken to the center and brought back out again. There will be security knowing there are no unpleasant surprises and no getting lost. In the forgiving walls of a labyrinth, children learn to trust. This labyrinth will be constructed from wood chip mulch within "walls" of low growing grasses. In the center, children will find a copper wind sculpture.

Young children need spaces that provide a sense of privacy, control, security, self-expression and social interactions. A play structure encourages curiosity and creativity while allowing children the opportunity to explore, build, climb, hide and move about. This pavilion area meets the needs of the young child to have a safe place. An open-topped structure, this pavilion will include an inside seating area within living walls, commonly referred to as green walls, a vertical garden which will include some sort of vegetation.







Handwritten text or signature at the bottom of the sketch, possibly reading "M. J. 1880" or similar.

## Contacts for Kinder Garden Project

- Beth Morgan, Coordinator, Kinder Garden Project 931-707-8167
- Walt Hitch, Superintendent, UT Plateau AgResearch Center 931-484-0034
- Gregg Upchurch, UT Extension Agent-Cumberland County 931-484-6743