

## Garden of Devotion Sharing and Activity Sheet for Students

### Gardens by the Bay Avatar:

- Landscape Designer

### Level/ Subject(s):

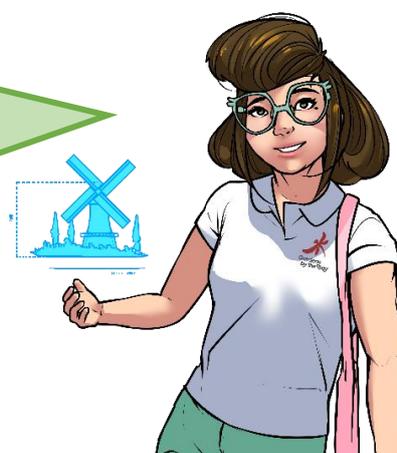
- Upper Primary/ CCE, Social Studies, Science, Art

### Learning Objectives:

- Understand how plants influence Indian culture and traditions
- Recognise the significance, features and uses of plants
- Learn how to design a themed garden

Hello students! My name is Liza. I'm a landscape designer and I've been working at Gardens by the Bay for 6 years!

Today I'll be sharing with you the features of a garden, with the Indian Garden as an example. I'll also share information on some plants that are significant to the Indian community to help you see how a themed garden can be designed. Let's begin!



Welcome to the Heritage Gardens, a collection of four themed gardens, namely the Indian, Malay, Chinese and Colonial Gardens. These themed gardens feature plants that are intricately linked to Singapore's culture. We will 'visit' the Indian Garden, where our sharing will take place.



Indian Garden, Heritage Gardens

### Features of the Indian Garden

A garden is usually made up of two components, the hardscape and the softscape. Hardscape refers to man-made structures such as sculptures, walking paths and fountains, while softscape refers to the plants found in the garden.

Let us take a look at the hardscape of the Indian Garden and their significance to Indian culture.

### **Hardscape - Elephant and Horse Sculptures**

Elephants and horses are significant to the culture and religion of the Indian community.

In India, Hindus celebrate elephant festivals to honour one of the most adored deities in India, Lord Ganesha, who has the head of an elephant and the body of a man, representing wisdom, prosperity and good fortune. Lord Ganesha is also known as the “remover of obstacles”, a characteristic of the elephant.



Elephant sculpture in Indian Garden



Illustration of Lord Ganesha

Apart from elephants, horses are also considered sacred animals that are believed to be related to the gods. Hindus believe that after a horse dies, its spirit returns to the home of the gods, where it came from. The horse is also believed to be the incarnation of the Hindu sun god, Surya, who rode a chariot pulled by seven horses. The seven horses are said to represent the seven days of a week and the seven colours of the rainbow.



Hindu sun god, Surya and his chariot pulled by seven horses

### Hardscape – Kolam

The Indian Garden is laid out in a lotus-shaped kolam, which is traditional folk art from India, in which patterns are drawn on the floor of living rooms or courtyards, using rice flour, chalk powder or white rock powder. Kolams can be made up of geometrical patterns or drawings of significant plants or animals in Indian culture. During important festivals such as Deepavali, complex kolams with more colours are usually drawn.



A kolam

#### Did You Know?

Other than the purpose of decoration, it is believed that a kolam is an invitation to welcome Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity and wealth into the home. The rice flour used also attracts birds and other small creatures to eat it, signifying the harmonious co-existence of Man and animals.

#### Activity 1 – What makes a Garden?

Why do you think the landscape designer of the Indian Garden chose to feature elephant and horse sculptures and the kolam in the garden? Pen your thoughts down in the box provided below.

## Softscape – Banyan Tree



Banyan Tree in Indian Garden

Let's take a closer look at the Banyan tree, a very important tree to the Indian community!

The Banyan Tree is able to grow up to 1,000 years old and is thus sacred to the Indians, representing eternal life. Temples or altars are usually built at the base of the tree. Also known as the 'wish-fulfilling' tree, it is believed to have the power to bring sincere prayers into reality. Till today, women in villages would light oil lamps and place them around the tree, wishing for good harvests.

Besides having spiritual and religious meaning, the Banyan Tree has many uses too. Its milky sap was traditionally used to treat pains, bruises and toothaches. The fibre from its bark can also be used to make paper and rope. The fruit of the Banyan Tree is considered an important food source for a host of animals, such as birds, primates, fruit bats and squirrels. So, the loss of one large Banyan Tree can have a significant effect on animal populations.

### Activity 2(a) – The Sacred Tree

Determine which of the following statements about the Banyan Tree are true or false. Circle either 'true' or 'false' for each statement.

i	It is also known as the 'wish-fulfilling' tree.	True / False
ii	It has spiritual and religious significance, but no known uses.	True / False
iii	It is sacred to the Indians, representing eternal life.	True / False

## Softscape – Toddy Palm

Next up, we've got the Toddy Palm!



Toddy Palm

Similar to the Banyan Tree, the Toddy Palm is originally found in India. It is a resilient palm that can grow up to 30m in height. In Indian culture, the Toddy Palm is also called the "celestial plant", as it is considered a gift from the gods because all its parts can be used.

Being an important source of sugar, the Toddy Palm is also known as the "sugar palm". In fact, the sugary sap (fluid found in plants, containing sugars and mineral salts) collected from its young flowers is called 'toddy', thus giving the palm its name. The sap can also be drunk as a beverage or fermented into palm wine and vinegar. The seeds and pulp of the fruit are edible as well.

### Did You Know?

Besides being an important food source, the Toddy Palm provides us with building materials. The leaves of the Toddy Palm are used for roof covers, weaving of mats, baskets, hats, umbrellas, and even writing material. The hard and durable stem of the Toddy Palm can also be used for construction.

### Activity 2(b) – A Divine Gift

Match the parts of the Toddy Palm with the correct uses.

Parts		Uses
Leaves		For construction
Young Flowers		For roof covers, weaving of mats, baskets, hats, umbrellas, etc.
Stem		For obtaining a sugary sap called 'toddy'

### Softscape – Banana

And last but not least, let's take a look at the Banana plant that we're all familiar with!



Banana plant



Banana fruits and flower

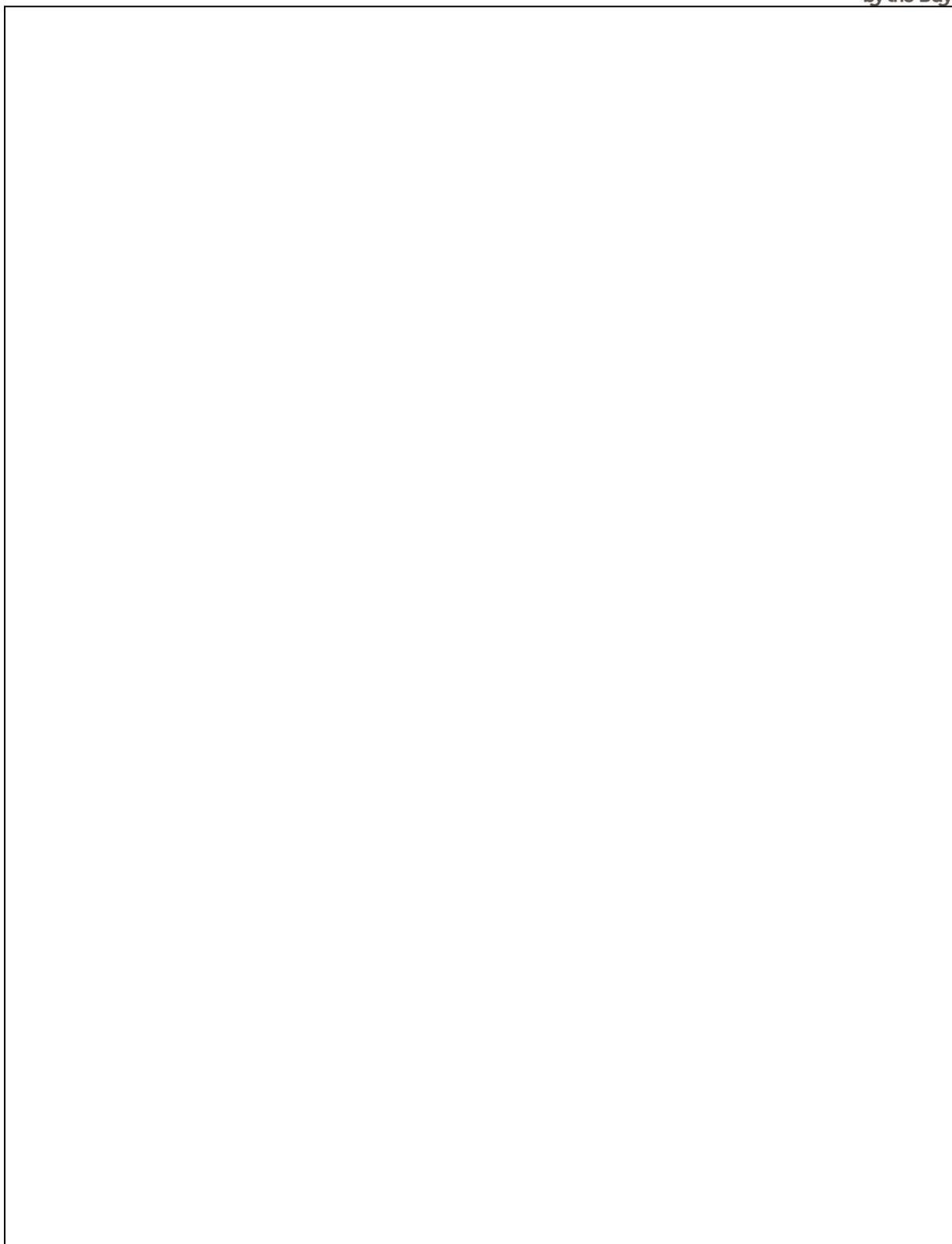
The Banana plant is a non-woody flowering plant. It is considered sacred to Indians, as every part of the plant can be used. Banana fruits are often used in religious offerings, symbolising fertility and abundance. Their stems are used to build welcome gates in religious ceremonies. The leaves have many uses as they are large, flexible and waterproof. They are used by Hindus as a decoration for special occasions such as marriages and religious ceremonies.

Banana leaves are also used for serving food and to wrap food prior to grilling or frying, allowing the fragrance of the leaves to add flavour to the dish, as well as prevent the food from drying up.

### Activity 3 – Design your own Indian Garden

Now that we've examined the hardscape and softscape of the Indian Garden at Gardens by the Bay in detail, it's time for you to design your very own Indian Garden!

Decide where you'd position the various sculptures and plants we have looked at today in your own Indian Garden, and include other elements you think are vital in illustrating the intricate relationship between plants and Indian culture to visitors. Use the box below to sketch your garden. Include labels to indicate where the various features and plants are.



We've come to the end of our sharing today! I hope you've enjoyed learning about what makes a garden, and how a themed garden can be designed. I hope to see you at the Gardens again soon!

