

# Imaginative Gardens

## DIY Greenhouse



Did you know that plants have long held a fascination for artists and architects?

For instance, artists have created botanical illustrations used for both pleasure and scientific study. One of the most famous and accomplished illustrators was [Maria Sibylla Merian \(1647-1717\)](#).

A special type of architecture called landscape architecture incorporates plants when designing parks, playgrounds and outdoor public spaces. We are lucky to feature the design work of Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, one of Canada's most well-known landscape architects currently at the AGA. Our exhibition includes drawings and blueprints of some of her most famous and innovative spaces.



# Meet Cornelia Hahn Oberlander

Source: <https://tclf.org/pioneer/cornelia-hahn-oberlander>

Cornelia Hahn Oberlander was born in Muelheim-Ruhr, Germany, in 1921 and as a child immigrated with her mother and sister to New York. Oberlander attended Smith College in the early 1940s, attracted to its interdepartmental program in architecture and landscape architecture. Later, Oberlander attended the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, graduating with a B.L.A. in 1947. The program encouraged collaboration across disciplines, which later would become her trademark. In 1953, Oberlander moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, with her husband, architect and city planner H. Peter Oberlander.

**Highlights from her illustrious career include:**

- The Children's Creative Center at Montreal's Expo '67
- Robson Square and the grounds of the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology in collaboration with Arthur Erickson.
- The grounds of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa (1984-1989), with Parkin/Safdie Architects
- Her more recent designs include the courtyard and roof garden for the New York Times Building in New York City, with H. M. White Site Architects and Architect Renzo Piano; the Canadian Embassy in Berlin, with Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects; the landscape for the Waterfall Building in Vancouver, with Erickson and Nick Milkovich Architects; and the Jim Everett Memorial Park on University of British Columbia Endowment Lands.
- The C.K. Choi Building-Institute for Asian Research, a project that Oberlander completed with Matsuzaki Architects at the University of British Columbia



# Your turn!

Dream, design and plant your own summer garden. Start your seeds early with a DIY greenhouse before planting your seedlings outside. Observe as your garden grows throughout the season and draw endless inspiration from the changing landscape.

## Step #1: Make a DIY greenhouse

To begin, make a greenhouse from materials in your recycling bin and start your gardening journey.

### Materials

- Clear, plastic berry or tomato containers
- Paper towel or toilet paper tubes
- Scissors
- Plastic or Styrofoam tray
- Potting soil
- Seeds
- Paper and drawing materials

### Procedure

1. Prepare your seed pots: cut your paper rolls into lengths of 3 inches/8cm long. Use your scissors to cut little tabs on one end of the roll and fold those inward to create a small pot.



2. Place your pots inside your berry container and add damp potting soil to each one. If the soil is dry, add a small amount of water to prevent it from becoming airborne and irritating your lungs.
3. Gently pack the soil to make a little bed for your seed. With your thumb, make a small indent in the soil at the center of your pot as the seed will need firm contact with the soil.
4. Plant your seed twice the depth of its width.
5. Place your greenhouse on a Styrofoam tray to protect the roots and help the greenhouse environment to stay moist.
6. Check your seedlings often in the morning and at night to ensure the soil is damp but not dripping wet.
7. As your garden begins to grow, gently brush your hand over the seedlings from time to time. This helps them to grow strong and withstand wind and rain once you plant them outside.

## Step #2: Make your own watering can

Shower your seedlings with love and water with your own watering can

### Materials

- Plastic water bottle (softer plastic, not a pop bottle) with a lid
- Hammer
- Nail for making holes in water bottle lid
- Paint and a brush

### Procedure

1. Take an empty recyclable water bottle and unscrew the top, have an Adult to help you punch three or four holes in the lid with a hammer and a nail.
2. Fill the bottle up with water, now you can squeeze out the water in gentle drops to water your greenhouse.

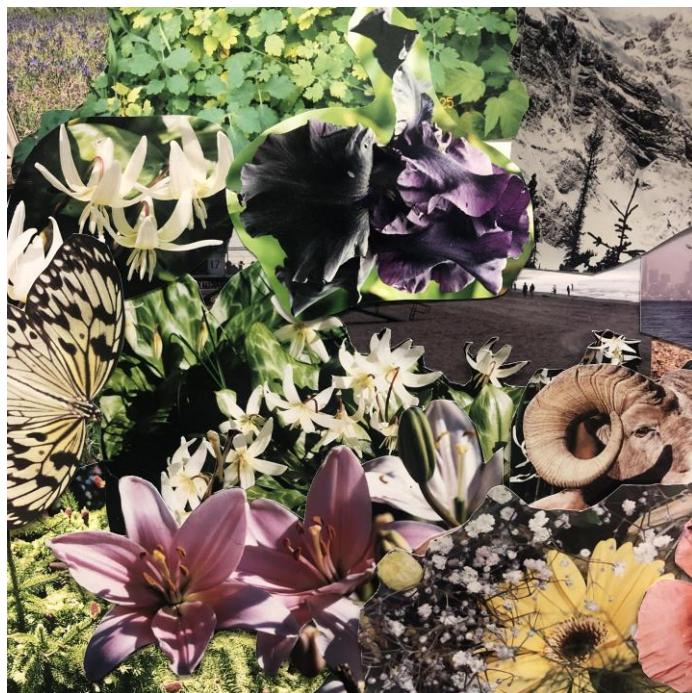


\*make sure to test in the sink first to make sure that the drops come out in a gentle stream

## Step 3: Observe your growing garden

People that run greenhouses take notes every day making observations of how the seeds germinate, how successful different plant types (cultivars) are, when the plants go into different stages of development (when they develop their “true” leaves which are the leaves they get after the first two little ones they come through the soil with).

Make a visual journal of your greenhouse by drawing the plants in their different stages, writing notes, observations and even some poetry! Draw what you imagine your garden will look like outside, imagine some fantasy plants that have magical powers, maybe add a Fairy or some insects and animals. Observe how the growing of plants makes you feel. Can you help a friend start their own greenhouse?



## Step 4: Thinking outside of the box

Check the area that you plan to plant and make a diagram of different ways that you can use the area. How much sun does it get? Where will you put the plants? What other elements can you add: water for birds, water for bees and butterflies, (<https://blog.cwf-fcf.org/index.php/en/beneficial-insect-water-dish/>) a hiding place for Fairies, birds or small animals, a place for you to lie down, observe the life in your garden and draw?

## Step 5: Plant your garden

After the last frost date (usually May long weekend), plant your seedlings outside. Dig a hole exactly as deep as your pot, you want to plant your seedling no deeper than where the “crown” (where the stem comes out of the soil) is. Tuck your little plant in well slightly higher than you think (the soil will settle), and ensure the soil makes contact with the roots and keep them snuggled in but able to grow outwards.

Lastly, water your plant where the soil was moved around to make sure your newly planted garden won’t dry out.

### Stuck on what to grow?

Here is a list of things you could consider growing that are easy to care for. The ones with stars are beneficial to bees, butterflies and birds!

#### Flowers

Nasturtium, Borage\*, Calendula\*, Cornflower (Bachelor Buttons)\*, Chamomile, Sunflowers\*, Marigolds, Zinnias, Wild Bergamot\*, Purple Lupines\*

#### Veggies

Broccoli, Cucumbers, Kale, Lettuces, Peppers, Scarlet Runner Beans\*, Squash, Tomatoes, Tomatillos

#### Herbs

Basil, Oregano\*, Thyme\*

Here is a **Planting Calendar** to help you know when is best to start certain seeds:

<https://www.almanac.com/gardening/planting-calendar/AB/Edmonton>



# Resources

Explore these resources for more information:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornelia\\_Oberlander](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornelia_Oberlander)

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/special/greenhouses/creating-a-mini-indoor-greenhouse.htm>

<http://edmontonnativeplantgroup.org/seed-collection-and-storage.htm>

<https://www.botanicalartandartists.com/about-maria-sibylla-merian.html>

<https://www.botanicalartandartists.com/>

<https://cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/DIY/outside/eight-plants-that-are-perfect.html>

