Frequently Asked Questions
Childhood’s Gate Children’s Garden

Is the children’s garden appropriate for a particular age range?

The garden was designed to primarily engage children of ages 3–12 but we think you will find that it is appropriate for the “child at heart” of all ages! Our garden should be explored by children and adults together.

Is there a fee to enter the children’s garden?

No. Admission to all areas of the Arboretum is free of charge.

Does the children’s garden offer programs for my child?

We do not currently have formal programming. In our first season we will be offering informal garden learning opportunities and special events. Please check our website for updates.

May I bring my stroller into the children’s garden?

Yes.

May children ride bikes in the children’s garden?

Bikes, scooters or other wheeled vehicles are not permitted in the H.O. Smith Botanic Gardens or in the children’s garden.

Is the children’s garden wheelchair-accessible?

Yes.

May I bring food and drink into the children’s garden?

No, we ask that you not bring food and beverages (other than bottled water) into any part of the H.O. Smith Botanic Gardens. There are cafes located in campus buildings close to the garden and we can direct you to those locations. There is also a public park (Sunset Park) at the end of McKee Street in the adjacent neighborhood where you may enjoy a picnic. You can read about many other public parks in the State College area where picnicking is allowed at http://www.crpr.org/Parks/pavs-lge/picnic_pavilions.html
May I drop off my child in the children’s garden?

No. In the children's garden and throughout the Arboretum, all children who are 12 years old and under must be in the company of an adult who is responsible for their supervision at all times. In addition, we recommend a ratio of one adult to every five children within Childhood’s Gate.

When is Childhood’s Gate open for visitation?

As with all areas in the H.O. Smith Botanic Gardens, visitors to the children’s garden are welcome from dawn until dusk.

What parking is available?

Visitors may park in the Arboretum’s lot, which holds approximately 55 cars. Overflow parking is available on weekday evenings and on weekends in the nearby lot of the Lewis Katz Building.

On weekdays, you may also pay by the hour (for up to four hours at a time) to park in the Lewis Katz Building lot by using an automated pay station which is located in that lot on the end adjacent to the intramural fields. The station accepts only coins or a credit card.

If you are bringing a group to visit on a weekday, you can consider hiring a shuttle to transport your group or contact the University’s Parking Office to make arrangements for parking.

Will there be staff on site in the children’s garden?

While educational activities are frequently conducted in the garden by employees, student interns, and volunteers, we cannot guarantee that staff will be on site at all times.

Do I need to call in advance if I am bringing a group of children?

Yes! Organizers of groups of 10 children or more should notify our tour coordinator so that we are aware of your planned visit and can help you to have an enjoyable experience. Please contact Nancy Stoner at nas26@psu.edu to plan a tour or schedule a group presence in the garden.

Should I bring a swimsuit for my child as I understand there are water features in the garden?

There are several water features within Childhood’s Gate. While it is expected that children will be attracted to these, we remind you that the garden is not a playground or park. Swimming or wading is not permitted in the entry pools or Spring Basin within the entry court.
There are many rock features in the garden. Will my child be free to climb anywhere?

The rocks and sculpture features in the garden are part of the learning landscape. It is not safe to climb on the Limestone Cave, Discovery Tree (or real trees), large boulders, planters, masonry, and other high points in the garden. Please remind your child that Childhood’s Gate is a garden. There are many local parks and recreation areas with spaces designed for climbing and very active play.

Are there other guidelines or rules for the children's garden?

Yes! Thank you for asking. Childhood’s Gate Children’s Garden Rules

The garden is a highly visited space and we want everyone to enjoy their experiences at Childhood’s Gate. To this end, our staff will intervene if they observe behavior that endangers the safety of visitors or negatively impacts the experience of other garden guests.