



Introduction to the Garden Learning Activities

Life in the Garden



DR. SUN YAT-SEN
CLASSICAL
CHINESE
GARDEN

Introduction to the Garden Learning Activities

Welcome to the Dr Sun Yat Sen Classical Chinese Garden!

Introduction to the Garden

Our Classical Chinese Garden in Vancouver was the first real, full size Chinese garden built outside of China. It opened in 1986.

It is modelled on Ming Dynasty scholars' gardens in the city of Suzhou in China. This is a garden home, where a Scholar and his family plus his servants would have lived during the Ming Dynasty era (1368 – 1644).

Scholars used their gardens as a place to escape the busy world. They created beautiful spaces to paint, write calligraphy, compose poetry and meditate.

A Scholar is a man who would have studied the Chinese classics, art and literature to a very high level in order to in prepare for the civil service (Government) examinations. If he passed the final examination, he entered government service as an official at the highest level.

Enjoy learning with us about what it was like to live in a home like this! When you next visit the Garden, you will be able to understand a lot more about what you see.

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Learning Activities - Scholar's Homes

A Scholar and his family would have lived in a home and garden just like ours in the Ming Dynasty period (1368 – 1644). There would have been many family members living together including the Scholar's parents, his wives, their children, aunts, uncles and cousins. The family were rich so they would have servants who also lived in the home.

This first picture shows our garden in Vancouver and the second picture shows what a garden and home like ours looked like in Ancient China.

Can you see the similarities? How are these homes different to yours?



Learning Activities - Ancient Learning

What was it like to be a kid living in a home like this?

When children were young, they would have been educated in reading, writing and numbers by the women in the house. As they grew older, boys and girls were educated separately.

Boys would study philosophy and classical literature and girls would learn embroidery, sewing and cooking. In a rich family, both boys and girls would continue to study reading, calligraphy (writing) and art. Grandfathers and fathers enjoyed spending leisure time with the children.

Like all children, Ming Dynasty children enjoyed playing games and making things. Toys and games were used as tools to teach children about art or culture.

You might be surprised to know that many toys and games we still know today were invented in ancient China.

In the following pages you will find some ways children in the Ming Dynasty used to have fun – and some ways you can join in too!



Learning Activities - Ancient Crafts

Bamboo Dragonflies (**'Zhuqingting'** 竹蜻蜓)

The bamboo dragonfly has been dated back to 500 BC in China and was introduced to Europe in the 18th century. Early European innovators in aviation (flying) were inspired by the concept of the bamboo dragonfly and used it to develop the first helicopters and other airplanes.

Traditionally, it is made up of two pieces of bamboo: a straight bamboo stick inserted into a hole at the center of a separate horizontal piece. The horizontal piece acts as a propeller, and by placing the stick in between both hands and rotating it, the bamboo dragonfly will fly upwards upon release.



Make it at home!

From: 365 Wired and Wonderful Science Experiments by E. Snoke Harris

You will need:

A drinking straw
Scissors
Cardstock
Stapler
Ruler

1. Cut 2 pieces of cardstock 3/4 inch wide and 4 inches long
2. Make the end of the straw flat and cut a slit down the centre, 1/2 inch long
3. Slide the cardstock pieces into the slit and staple them to the straw.
4. Fold and crease the cardstock pieces down and at an angle to make the propeller blades.
5. Unfold the blades so they are straight out from the straw but slightly angled.

To launch the helicopter, hold the straw between your hands and twist your hands quickly in opposite directions to spin it. Let go and watch it fly!

Suggestion: try different thicknesses of cardstock and bending the propeller blades at different angles – up and down. Does it make a difference to how high it goes?

You might also like this: <http://almostunschoolers.blogspot.com/2011/05/folk-toy-fridays-hand-propeller.html>



Learning Activities - Ancient Crafts

Kites

('Fēngzhēng' 风筝)

Did you know the Chinese were flying kites as early as the 5th Century BC? The first kites were made of bamboo and silk and were used for military purposes, not for fun! Army generals used them to measure distances for moving troops over a large area of land. They were also used for signaling and to measure wind speed. By the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644), kites had become decorative and artistic. They showed beautiful pictures of birds or flowers, or were in the form of mythological or symbolic creatures.



Today, kites in China come in all shapes and sizes. The longest ever kite was flown in 2015 at the Chongqing International Kite Festival and was 6 000m long! Kites are flown at any time of the year. But they are often flown on Tomb Sweeping Day in early April which is a public holiday to remember and honour ancestors. Some people like to write messages on kites, hoping the kites can carry the messages to family members who are no longer living.

Make it at home! – A Recycled Newspaper Kite

From: <https://buggyandbuddy.com/make-kite/>

There are many websites you can find with instructions on how to make beautiful Chinese-style kites. You can practice by making a simple 4 sided-shaped kite like this one.

You will need:

- A full sheet of newspaper (a white garbage bag also works) - painted and decorated if you want!
- 2 wooden dowels (one 24", one 20") -
- Scissors / String / Paper / Ruler / Masking tape
- A small handsaw
- Optional: yarn and ribbons

1. Cut the dowels to the correct length if necessary. (Ask an adult to help with step 1 and 2)
2. Use the handsaw to make notches across both ends of the two dowels. This is for wrapping the string around the frame of the kite.
3. Lay the longer dowel on the floor and make a mark 6" from the top. Lay the shorter dowel at that mark to form a T-shape and use the string to wrap them tightly together where they meet. Make sure the notches on the dowel ends are all parallel to the floor before you wrap the string. Wrap masking tape over the string to secure the two dowels together.
4. Wrap the string all the way around the kite, making sure it goes into the notches. You will have made a classic kite-shape frame.
5. Lay your large sheet of newspaper on the floor and lay the frame on it. Cut about 1 inch outside the frame to make the newspaper the same shape.

Learning Activities - Ancient Crafts

6. Fold the edges of the newspaper over the frame and tape down securely.
7. Cut a piece of string 24 inches long. Poke holes into the top and bottom points of the kite. Tie one end of the string into the top hole and one end into the bottom hole. (Use some tape to keep it secure.) This is the bridle of your kite. Tie your flying string to this bridle string to fly your kite. You may need to adjust the position of the flying string on the bridle when you fly it.
8. Optional: tie ribbons on to the yarn to make a tail for the kite.
9. You are ready to fly!



You might also like this:

<https://www.instructables.com/Newspaper-Kite/>
<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-Chinese-Kites>



Learning Activities - Ancient Games

Cuju (蹴鞠)



Cuju is seen as the origin of today's soccer. It was mentioned in texts as long ago as the Han Dynasty (206 BCE - 220 CE) when it was used as a military training exercise. It became very popular during the Song Dynasty (960 - 1279) when it was enjoyed as both a sport and a spectacle by all levels of society from the Emperor to the lower classes. Players became well known and were paid to play. Women formed teams too - there is evidence that a team of 17 year old girls beat a team of soldiers!

The sport fell out of popularity during the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644).

Cuju had two distinct styles: 'zhuqui' was played with two opposing teams who tried to score the most goals, similar to today's soccer. Unlike soccer, however, there was only one goal in the middle of the field. The goal was a net stretched between two poles with a hole in it and to score a goal, players had to kick the ball through the hole.

'Baida' was a style of cuju that emphasized individual skills. Players gained points for their ball handling skills and style. Points were deducted if the ball wasn't kicked accurately enough. The player with the most points won.



Chinese ladies playing cuju, by the Ming Dynasty painter Du Jin

Play it at home!

From <https://healthahoy.com/ancient-sports/chinese-cuju-ancient-soccer/>

You will need:

A soccer ball

A goal: this can be a volleyball net with a 2' diameter hole cut in it OR a small hula hoop mounted on poles about 5 - 8' high.

Team Sport ('Zhuqui'):

Teams can have up to 16 players. The object of each team is to pass the ball through the central goal from their side of the field using any part of the body except the hands. Teams set up on each side of the field. When a team passes the ball through the goal, they score a point. At the end of the game, whichever team scored the most points wins. Either play to a set number of points or set a time limit like traditional soccer.

Contest of Skill ('Baidi'):

This is the individual version of the game. Players take turns trying to score a goal. Remember that you can touch the ball with any part of the body except the hands!



Learning Activities - Ancient Games

Spinning Top (‘Tuo luo’ 陀螺)

The Spinning Top is the world’s oldest toy. Types of spinning tops have been found in ancient archeological sites across the world so we don’t really know who invented them.

Chinese spinning tops date back to about 4 000 BC. These earliest tops were made using things found in nature – nuts, seeds, bamboo and so on. Later on, a length of string or cord, known as a ‘whip’, was wound around a wooden or stone or pottery top which was pulled away sharply to make the top spin. This type of top is the most popular in China today.



It seems tops have always been used as toys and in ancient China, women who lived at the Emperor’s Palace played with them to pass the time. By the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644), tops were seen as a children’s toy. Nowadays, spinning tops are hugely popular in China and even used in competitions called ‘da tuoluo’. In these competitions there are different types of games, such as the ones where opponents try to knock over each other’s top or where tops navigate obstacles. In the competitive sport the whip can be as long as 2m.

Make it at home!

You will need:

A plastic lid (e.g. from a yoghurt container)

Paper

Markers or acrylic paint

Stickers, glue etc. to decorate

Ruler

A wooden skewer (which can be bought in Dollar Stores)



1. Decorate the plastic lid. You can decorate directly on the lid or make a pattern on paper and glue it on. Spirals look good when it is spinning and segments of colour blend together.
2. Poke the skewer through the middle of the lid. You may need to make the first cut with a sharp tool like a knife. To find the middle, measure the diameter (the line that goes through the middle of the circle) and mark its centre point.
3. You are ready to spin!

Suggestion: try using different size circles. Does it make the top spin faster or slower? Try making the skewer shorter. Does that make it easier to spin? Options: Think of ways to make spinning tops using other objects. How about toothpicks, pencils, old CDs, melted beads, paper plates, Lego, bottle tops, washers or beads?

You might also like: <https://buggyandbuddy.com/spinning-top-crafts/>

Here is a link to a great video about different tops from around the world from 1969: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJ-VFMymEiE>



Learning Activities - Animals in the Garden

The family that lived in a garden home like ours were surrounded by nature. Their Gardens were designed to show off beautiful views and to create a sense of tranquility and peace, just like in the countryside. They also wanted to bring nature in to their homes, which is why they built small mountains of rocks, had fish ponds and grew plants and trees just like in real forests.

They also surrounded themselves with animals: some real, like koi fish, and some symbolic. There are many animal shapes in our Garden. Can you guess which animals these shapes represent? The answers are on the next page!



Learning Activities - Animals in the Garden - Answers



These are **bats**! There are bats all over our Garden.

They represent good luck because part of the word that means bat in Chinese, 'fu' or 'fuk', sounds like the word that means good fortune and blessings. The word for bat in written Chinese is 蝙蝠



This is one of our beautiful Tai Hu rocks. All of the rocks in our Garden come from Lake Tai in China. Their interesting shapes have been formed by erosion, so they are completely naturally formed.

Some people can see funny patterns in the rocks. Many people can see a **horse's head**, or even a **seahorse** in this rock. The red line shows you where the horse's head shape is. Next time you come to the Garden you can see if for yourself!



The roof of the Ting pavilion looks a bit like the beautiful, sweeping tail of the **Phoenix**. The Phoenix is a mythological animal that the ancient Chinese said represented the Empress - the wife of the Emperor. The Phoenix is often found next to the Dragon in Chinese art. The Dragon represented the Emperor.



There are some rocks in our Garden that act as steps. The rounded shapes of these rocks look a bit like **turtle** shells.

The ancient Chinese thought that turtles represented long life. Therefore, they said that anyone who stepped on these rocks would live for a long, happy life!



Learning Activities - Patterns in the Garden

The Garden is home to a wide range of beautiful patterns. From patterned windows to courtyards, screens and more, patterns cover every space.



Windows



Courtyards



Do you notice that each pair of pictures shows one pattern that is curved or flowery, and one pattern that is straight or geometric in design? This is because our Garden has been designed so that opposites are always balanced. This is from the Daoist philosophy of Yin and Yang. Patterns that are curved represent the feminine (yin) while straight lines and geometric shapes represent the masculine (yang).



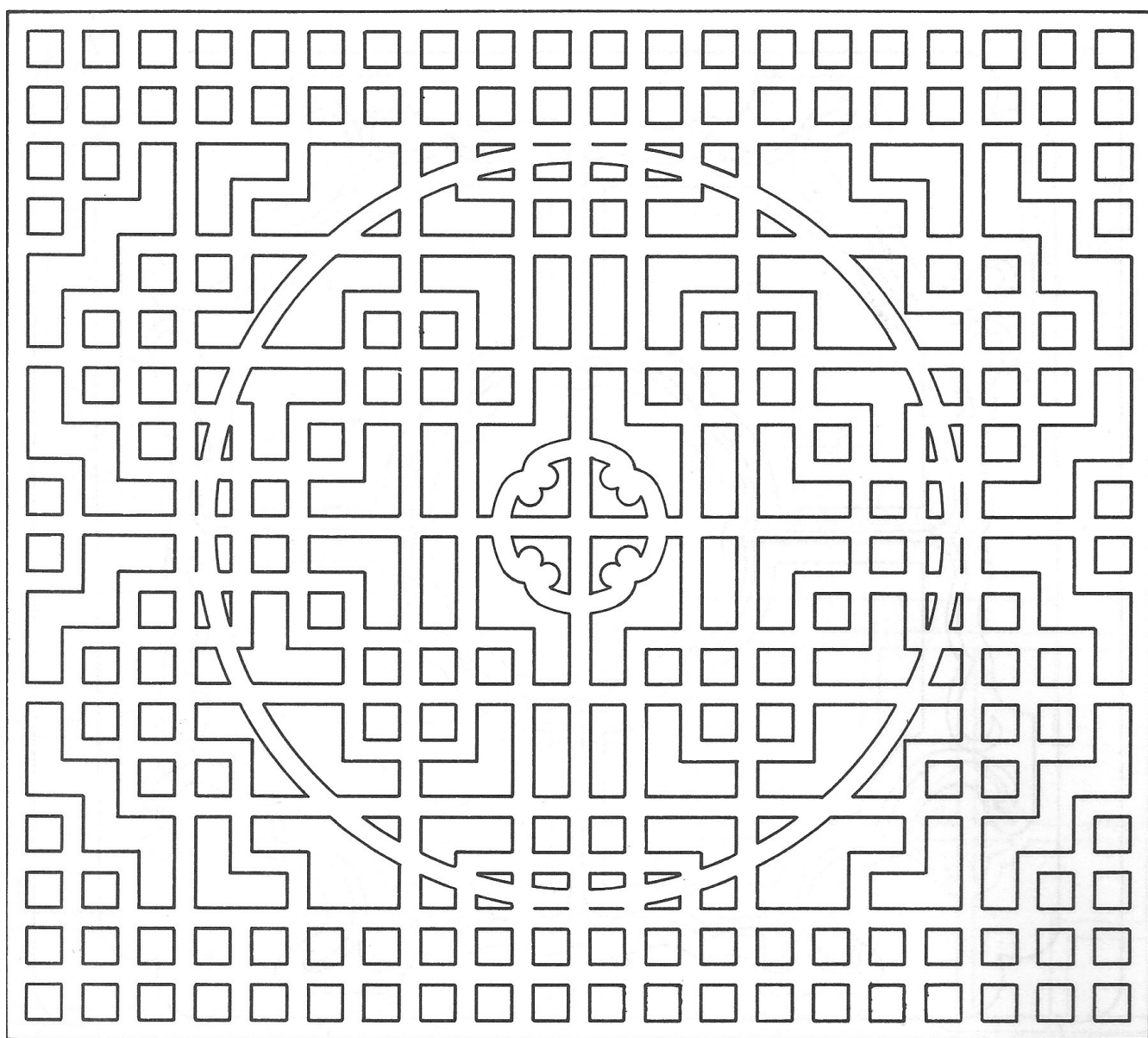
This is the symbol of Yin and Yang. It shows that everything and everyone requires the balance of two sides to be whole. To find harmony and peace, there must be balance between opposites. You won't find this symbol in our Garden but the ideas behind it are everywhere.



Learning Activities - Patterns in the Garden

Here are some colouring pages. Are they yin or yang designs?

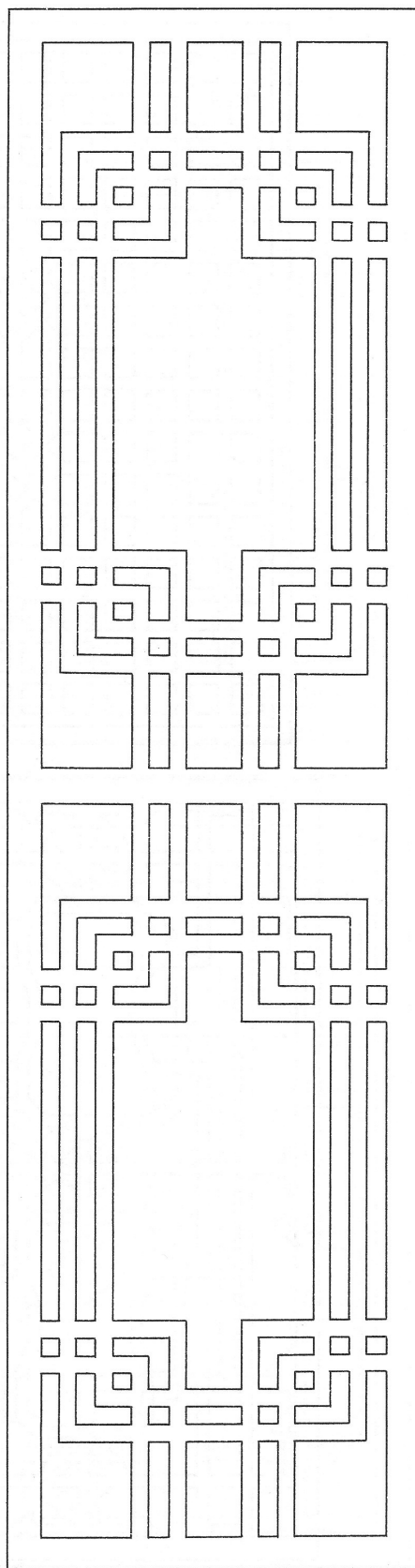
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Learning Activities - Patterns in the Garden

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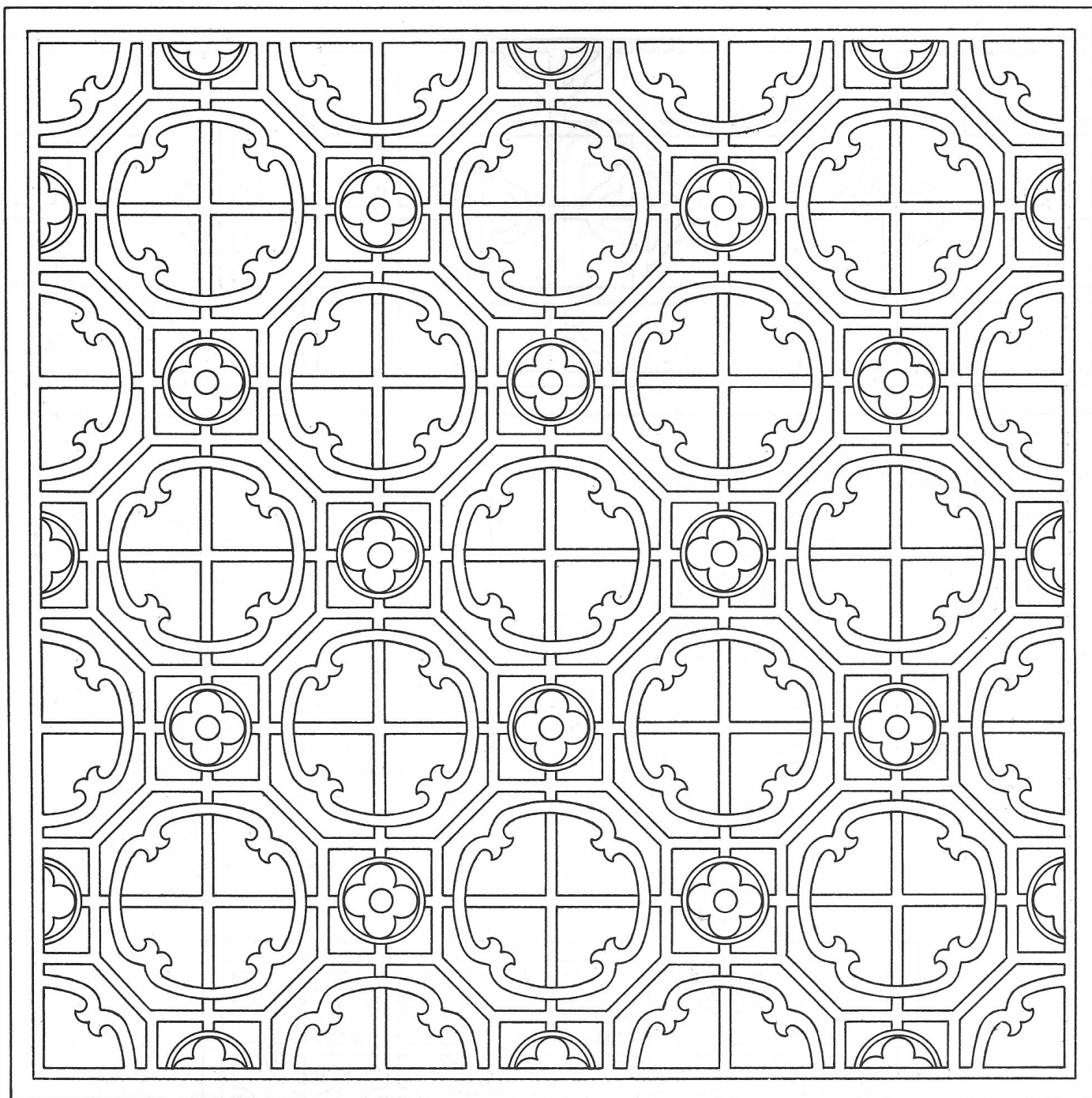
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Learning Activities - Patterns in the Garden

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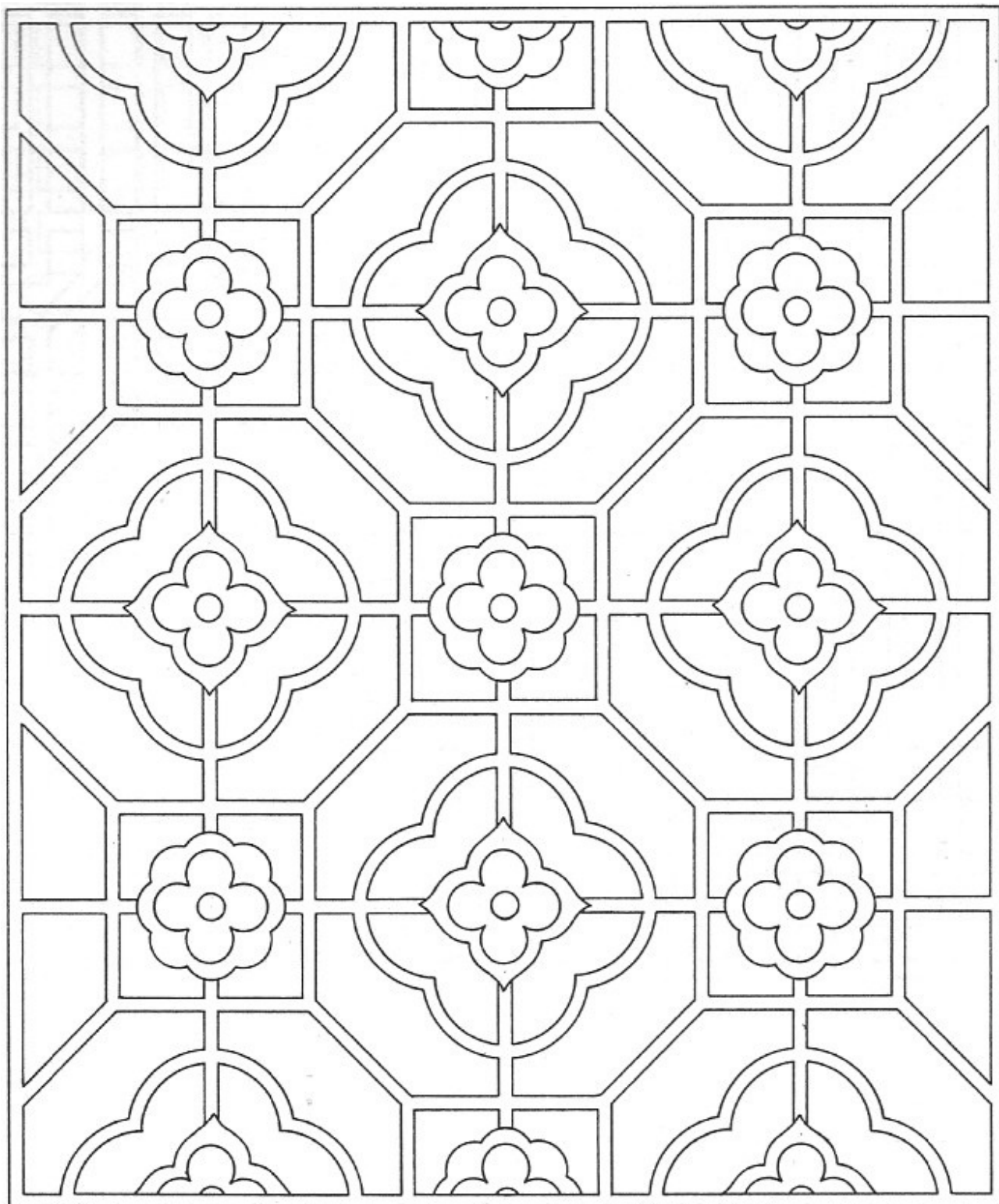
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Learning Activities - Patterns in the Garden

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Learning Activities - Websites and resources

Classical Chinese Gardens

<https://www.chinahighlights.com/suzhou/top-five-gardens.htm>

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/clpg/hd_clpg.htm

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cgrk/hd_cgrk.htm

Scholars

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/schg/hd_schg.htm

Symbolism

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cnat/hd_cnat.htm

https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/Chinese_Customs/flowers_symbolism.htm

https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/Chinese_Customs/animals_symbolism.htm

<https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/yin-and-yang/277845>

<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Daoism/353835>

Ming Dynasty, Confucianism and the Family

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ming/hd_ming.htm

<https://www.history.com/news/7-things-you-may-not-know-about-the-ming-dynasty>

<http://themingdynasty.org/ming-dynasty-social-structure.html>

<http://factsanddetails.com/china/cat4/sub21/item107.html#chapter-9>

<https://asiasociety.org/education/women-traditional-china>

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/teaching-modules/221>

<https://vancouverchinesegarden.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Confucius.pdf>

Recommended books for kids

See Inside Ancient China

A fascinating flap book packed with interesting information about Ancient China, from the earliest civilisation to the Ming Dynasty. Suggested for younger grades.

Great Ancient China Projects You Can Build Yourself

A resource that explores Chinese inventions and includes 25 hands-on projects for Grades 3+.

