

## Make a nature mandala

Credit: Bernie Sinnott and Gerry O'Neill, JFK Memorial Park & Arboretum

In its simplest form, a mandala is a circular structure with a design that radiates out symmetrically from the centre. You can find mandalas in flowers, tree rings, spider webs, seashells and more.

There is a very old Indian language called Sanskrit in which mandala translates as circle.

### Construction of a nature mandala

Pick a location in your garden, e.g. a tree, or even select a clear area. If you pick a clear area, find the centre, and mark it using a natural object.



*Mandalas in nature. Photo: Cordula Weiss*

If you use a tree as your centre (your mandala will be bigger), you might need a measuring tape, and some timber or bamboo rods. Anything will do as long as the rods are all the same length.

Go into your garden and look for examples of mandalas. Collect materials such as flower petals, leaves, pine cones, pine needles, twigs, bark, moss, ferns, grass, stones or pebbles. When all of the material has been gathered, start creating the mandala. If doing this as a family divide into the group into two or more teams.

If you chose a clear area for the mandala:

- Mark the centre of the mandala with a natural object e.g. a stone or a pine cone.
- Team A: Select the material that you want use to make your first circle. Then place this material into a circle around the natural object.
- Team B: Select another material to add the next circle. Place this material into a circle around the circle that Team A has done. You can have as many circles as you like and will be working outwards from the centre.
- Keep repeating this work and keep rotating between teams until you use up all of your material. Take a photograph of you work.

If you chose a tree as the centre of the Mandala

- Place the timber or bamboo rods on the ground, evenly spaced (check using measuring tape) until you complete circle around the tree. Now you will have an even amount of spaces, which are radiating out symmetrically. If you have ant rods left over place them on the ground between the tops of the radiating rods again to complete the circle.

- Team A selects a material and places that material over any one of the timber rods radiating outwards. If there is any of this material left over, Team B can place it over the rod which is opposite the first rod used. If not, select a different material and cover in the opposite rod.
- Teams take it in turns to fill in all of the rods and all of the spaces between them

### Teamwork & Memories

The construction of a mandala can be very rewarding, you will have fostered a love of nature, encouraged teamwork and have created a happy memory for the family. Remember use your imagination and create your own designs.



*Mandala created at the JFK Memorial Park & Arboretum. A tree marks the centre of the mandala.*



*Mandalas created on a clear area. Photo credit: [www.outdoorclassroom.com](http://www.outdoorclassroom.com)*