

**MAKE IT**

**THE  
GROWING  
SCHOOLS GARDEN**

**LEARNING OUTSIDE  
THE CLASSROOM**

Creativity Courtyard

# Gabions

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## Filled and decorated gabion cages



### Description

Rock-filled gabions (mesh boxes filled with stone) that will reflect the geological and architectural diversity of the landscapes in which the participating schools are placed.

### Function

The gabions have a range of uses including dividing walls within the garden, and informal and inexpensive practical seats that relate to the context.

### Location

Use throughout the garden but notably in the poetry seating area where they will create serpentine benches.

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## Construction materials

### Cage

The gabion cages are made of wire, and hold 500mm<sup>3</sup> of granular material. Actual dimensions vary but most will be 500mm x 500mm x 500mm.

### Filling

Each school should collect local stone to fill one gabion. Maximum size of particles used for fill is 150mm; minimum size is 50mm. Slate, limestone, granite, sandstone etc are envisaged but if schools wish to reflect their industrial or architectural heritage then tiles, brick, logs etc are also suitable.

### Decoration

Each school creating a gabion is asked to create at least one individual marker for their gabion, which could be in the form of a plaque, tile or cushion.

You may choose to include information such as the school name, logo, location, heritage or your choice of materials for your gabion basket. Some of the gabions will be used as serpentine-shaped seating in the poetry-and-storytelling seating area, so you may choose to link to this theme.

The plaque could be made from any material (e.g. ceramic, metal, textile), although it should be weatherproof and as hardwearing as possible. A method for fixing the plaque to wire mesh should be incorporated where possible. (E.g. a hole allowing the plaque to be attached with wire.)

A cushion/covering could be created for the top of the basket, which measures 50cm x 50cm. The cushion should be suitable for heavy use and weatherproof where possible.

## Contributing schools

### Costessey High School, Norfolk

The gabion basket proved a challenge – one of our pupils made a 0.5 cubic metre wooden frame around which we wired plastic netting in order for us to measure sufficient flints to fill the basket. To decorate the basket, our Art Technician worked with pupils who created sets of nine clay tiles each set depicting a species of Norfolk wildlife and its habitat – a bittern, a swallowtail butterfly, a water vole and a bee. Each set of nine will then be wired onto each of the four side-faces of the basket.

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For the seat, nine ceramic tiles (obtained from our local recycling 'superstore' Mini-Scrapbox) were painted with different species featured in Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Wild File as endangered Norfolk species. These were then, mounted into a wooden frame on a marine-ply base and the whole seat varnished to protect it from the elements.



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## **Crispin School, Somerset**

Pupils have made wothy mats, and filled bottles with peat. These will be placed in decorative layers in a wire gabion and will act as seat.

## **Esh Winning Primary School, Durham**

We decided to fill our gabion cage with old colliery bricks and coal to represent our village's mining heritage. Daniel aged 7, Joshua aged 6 and Mrs Corrigan (teacher) went for a walk in woodland that has been created on the old brickworks to find old bricks. They found 25 bricks but could only carry two, one and six respectively. The children searched allotments and parents' gardens to find bricks.

We made a cushion to sit on the top. This was made in a traditional proggie style out of recycled plastic carrier bags. (the cushion had to be waterproof). The children drew designs to represent how our beautiful valley looks today after the closure of the pits. Bethany's (aged 8) was chosen as it shows many features of our valley today: wildlife, farming, woodlands and the Deerness river. We involved members of our community to learn the traditional skills needed to make a proggie mat.

*'I have learnt how to make a proggie mat, like my great-grandmother used to make and I enjoyed the help I got from my gardening club friends.'* Daniel, aged 7.

*'I can now balance four bricks on my bicycle.'* Megan, aged 11.

## **Hintlesham and Chattisham C. of E. V.C. Primary School, Suffolk**

We made a plaque for the gabion of Suffolk flints with the school logo, name and flowers.



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## Leedstown Community Primary School, Cornwall

We provided local rock for a gabion and an identifying slate that was painted by the children

## Portway Junior School, Hampshire



## West Hill Primary School, Devon

We filled a gabion basket with local Jurassic pebbles and, as its centrepiece, a polished stone map of Devon showing the location of our school sculpted by a local craftsman, from a proforma made by one of the pupils.



*'The quarry visit was absolutely fantastic. I learned a lot about Devon rocks, how they are quarried and how old they are.'*

# MAKE IT

In the garden

