



PercussionPlay®
Outdoor Musical Instruments

Outdoor Musical Instruments for
Libraries and Reading Gardens

Where Ideas Flow, Music Grows and Libraries Flourish

There are many ways outdoor musical instruments can transform library gardens, StoryWalks®, and pollinator gardens into vibrant, hands-on learning spaces that extend learning beyond books.

♪ Growing Community Learning Through Outdoor Musical Play

Outdoor musical instruments are powerful additions to library gardens, StoryWalks®, and pollinator areas, creating inclusive, intergenerational spaces that encourage active participation, strengthen social connection, and support wellbeing across all ages. In turn, this helps to increase visitor traffic and repeat visits.

♪ Enhance Outdoor Learning & Literacy

Installed along story walks or in reading gardens, instruments act as hands-on learning touchpoints that support STEAM, sensory engagement, and outdoor literacy with minimal setup. They encourage creativity, pattern-making, and sound exploration that complement story-based learning and nature-based educational themes.



🎵 Accessible Music for All

Percussion Play's outdoor musical instruments break down barriers and create inclusive play opportunities for people of all abilities. With no prior musical knowledge needed, they offer sensory-rich, hands-on fun that supports inclusive environments and joyful participation for everyone.

🎵 Support Pollinator & Nature-Based Initiatives

Installed among pollinator-friendly beds, instruments prompt visitors to compare natural and musical soundscapes, reinforcing seasonal awareness and informal STEAM learning. This aligns with the library's priorities in sustainability, outdoor education, and community partnerships.

🎵 New Nature Themed Additions

The Ladybug, Sylvan Bells, Toadstool, and Butterfly integrate visually into gardens while offering high-quality, low-maintenance sound play - ideal for sensory paths, outdoor classrooms, and landscape-driven design.

🎵 Ready to Go Ensembles

Percussion Play's pre-designed ensembles allow libraries to create instant music stations without specialist planning. These sets work well along story routes or beside outdoor seating and are useful for grant-funded expansions.



Harmony Made Easy: 7 Affordable Outdoor Music Solutions

With budget cuts affecting public programs, libraries are seeking creative, low-cost ways to enrich outdoor spaces and continue engaging their communities. Outdoor musical instruments provide an ideal solution because they offer education, entertainment, and long-term value, all while encouraging creativity and social connection. Whether you're refreshing a reading garden or reimagining a courtyard, here are seven affordable ways to bring music outdoors without overextending your budget.

1. Start Small with Single Instruments

A single outdoor instrument can transform your space. Budget-friendly pieces like the [Penta Post](#), [Ladybug](#), or [Petal Drum](#) provide a hands-on, sensory experience and are compact enough for small outdoor areas. They're an affordable first step toward a vibrant sound garden.



Penta Post



Daisy Petal Drum



Ladybug

2. Build Gradually Over Time

A large budget isn't needed to make a lasting impact. If funds are limited, start with one or two instruments that work on their own but form part of a larger ensemble. This lets you enhance your outdoor space gradually while keeping costs manageable. Over time, you can build a vibrant multi-instrument area that grows with your library's needs. Browse our [Ensembles](#) for inspiration.

3. Use Color and Sound to Draw People In

Vibrant and visually striking instruments like [Harmony Bells](#) or [Harmony Flowers](#) double as outdoor art - helping to brighten gardens, patios, and pathways with color and form. Their eye-catching designs invite spontaneous play and draw attention to underused spaces, offering both fun and functionality without the need for costly landscaping.

4. Create a Storytime Soundtrack

Bring your story sessions outdoors and pair them with sound! Outdoor instruments can add a new dimension to storytime and early literacy programs. Use [Drums](#) or [Chimes](#) to create sound effects during read-alouds - transforming simple stories into interactive, multisensory experiences that stimulate imagination and engagement. It's also cost-effective: you're enhancing existing programs, not adding new ones.



Harmony Made Easy: 7 Affordable Outdoor Music Solutions

5. Engage the Community

Invite local schools, families, or friends of the library to get involved with funding, sponsorship, or donations. Many communities are eager to support accessible, creative initiatives. A small [fundraiser or grant](#) application can go a long way toward helping install a new piece of musical equipment.

6. Choose Cost-Effective Sets

The [Rainbow Trio Ensemble](#) is a budget-friendly bundle of three compact, colorful instruments - perfect for libraries with limited space or funding. This trio introduces children and families to melody, rhythm, and harmony in a fun, space-saving, and affordable way.



7. Use Existing Green Spaces Creatively

Transform a small seating area, garden, or pathway into a musical discovery zone. You don't need a full playground to offer rich experiences - just a few well-placed instruments can invite interaction, inspire creativity, and support wellness for visitors of all ages.

Pairing these instruments with a pollinator garden adds an extra layer of engagement, providing children with the opportunity to observe bees, butterflies, and birds while making music. This creates a multi-sensory space that connects sound, nature, and learning. Consider adding one of our musical [Bumblebees](#) or a [Dragonfly](#) for an extra touch of whimsy!

Musical Value Without the High Price Tag

Even on a limited budget, outdoor musical instruments can transform a small green space into a powerful community asset.

These durable, low-maintenance additions promote learning, creativity, and social connection - without ongoing costs or complex upkeep.

With just a few well-placed instruments, libraries can create joyful, inclusive spaces that enrich the community for years to come.



Palm Harbor Library's Outdoor Music Garden, FL

Palm Harbor Library has a history of promoting and supporting the visual and performing arts. Past and current collaborations include curated art pieces in the John Brock Art Alcove, a Children's Art MakerSpace, an outdoor sculpture, a partnership with the Leepa-Rattner Museum of Art, and a musical instrument collection for loan.

The outdoor musical garden is another example of their commitment to nurturing future musicians within the community and encouraging people of all ages and abilities to come together and be creative.



Cyclone



Rainbow Cavatina



Sunflower Petal Drum

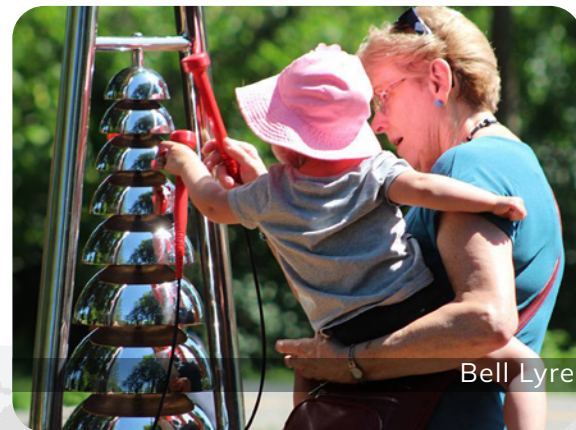
Gene Coppola, Library Director at Palm Harbor Library, comments, “When Covid occurred, not surprisingly, the library’s foot traffic decreased dramatically. The usage of many hands-on services declined, and library resources as a whole were impacted. It was during this dark time that opportunity rather than despair presented itself. It got the staff thinking in new ways about how best we can still serve; how to overcome these obstacles to accessibility. One way was to create a drive-thru window, and the other was an outdoor musical garden. The thinking for the latter was that since there was still a concern about entering a building where many people may be congregating, why not offer a service where residents can still enjoy the arts? And like that, the “Musical Garden” was born!”

Six outdoor instruments from Percussion Play are installed along the library’s west side adjacent to the “Reading Garden.” These instruments include the [Bell Lyre](#), [Rainbow Cavatina](#), [Cyclone](#), [Rainbow Bongos](#), [Sunflower Petal Drums](#), and [Harmony Bells](#).

The library’s additions were made possible through the estate of Dorothy & Frank Greenstreet, two community members who have given much to the library over the years. Their musical contributions through various programs accentuate the importance of the arts, providing so much pleasure to so many.



Rainbow Cavatina



Bell Lyre

Music Ignites Pollinator Garden at Benzie Shores Library, MI

Stacy Pasche's view outside her office at Benzie Shores Library was once just a pile of dirt. Now, outside the Library Director's office, there is a music garden designed to welcome nature and draw the local community into exploring what the library offers.

With a memorial donation from a local Frankfort resident, the library was tasked with creating a music-themed project. The team at the library agreed on creating a children's music garden. Stacy and her team worked hard to transform the area outside the library into a space that not only welcomes bees, butterflies, and birds but also encourages people in the community to come to the library and discover what it has to offer.

Stacy noticed Percussion Play's instruments at a park in a nearby town and decided to install similar outdoor musical instruments at her library. She chose a variety of instruments [Inspired By Nature](#) to complement the flowers and plants in the library's garden.



Harmony Bells



Liberty Bells



Sunflower Petal Drum

The library chose Harmony Bells because of their sound. Stacy says, “We were impressed how the bells chime; they carry beautiful sounds. It seemed like a natural choice for the garden, and they look great. We liked the variety of the color, the shape, and the size - they’re great!”. Also within the music garden is the [Sunflower Petal Drum](#), which is particularly popular, and this is nestled next to the [Liberty Bells](#) in the corner of the garden.

Music was chosen as it complements the library’s literacy offerings. Stacy says, “Music plays a part in literacy in many ways. Just as taste, textures, and colors aid a child’s sensory development, so does music. Even before babies can talk, their babbling and sound play help them develop the neural pathways necessary for listening and speaking. Children mimic music and sound they hear as an additional way to understand and make sense of the world around them.”

Named the Harmony Garden, it attracts people of all ages and promotes intergenerational play. Grandparents bring their grandchildren to play music together, and, as Stacy says, the instruments have had an “amazing impact” on the community, adding, “They’re not just for children! It has been a joy to watch people of all ages explore the garden and the instruments.”

Stacy says, “We’ve seen our street presence increase, and people are now discovering their local library. The library is a nondescript brick building, a boring office, but since we’ve put in the Harmony Garden, people see that there is a library here now. We’re not hidden anymore, and it’s beckoning people to come play at the library. We’ve had more people coming in and exploring everything that we have to offer.”



Harmony Bells



Sunflower Petal Drum

Funktastic Rhythms at Dayton Metro Library, OH

During a system-wide facility upgrade to Dayton's 16 library branches, the community was asked what they would like at Dayton Metro Library, and one of the ideas that came out of the discussion was how they could reflect Funk in the library. The outcome was the creation of a music garden.

Jayne Klose, the Community Engagement Manager at Dayton Metro Library, was part of the team that renovated the library and helped create an outdoor play opportunity to honor Funk music.

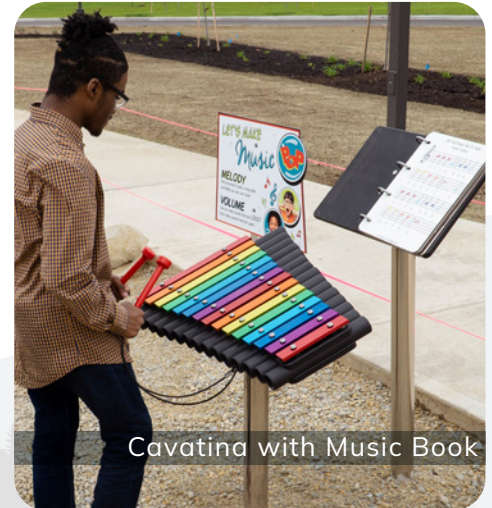
The team discussed which instruments would be most appropriate, and they soon realized they had to have drums, which would nod to funk music and James Brown's influence. They included the [Large Babel Drum](#), [Cajon Drum](#), [Papilio](#), [Emperor Chimes](#), [Calypso Chimes](#), and the [Rainbow Cavatina](#) with [Music Book](#).



Papilio



Emperor Chimes



Cavatina with Music Book

The percussion playground is used by the Children's Librarians, who use it for pre-school storytime. This session always includes some play elements. The playground is situated just off the patio, and the librarians regularly see children run over and play the instruments with little or no encouragement.

The Dayton Metro Library has partnered with an organization called 'Learn to Earn,' which initiated 'Play on Purpose' sites, or POP sites. These sites are marked with signs to encourage parents and caregivers to take advantage of spontaneous learning opportunities. Dayton Metro Library is now recognized as a 'Play on Purpose site' where early literacy is encouraged.

One of the features of this program is the percussion playground, where parents and caregivers are prompted to engage their children in conversations about vibrations and sounds. Additionally, visitors can learn about the history of Funk Music and even try playing some Funk themselves.

"Families coming and going from the library start or finish their trip with a music jam. The beauty of these instruments is that the whole family can play. They're for everyone!"

♪ Jane Klose ♪

Community Engagement Manager at Dayton Metro Library



Calypso Chimes



Cavatina with Music Book

STEAM Education & Music at Brighton District Library, MI

We have all seen how libraries can diversify, with many now offering more than just books. Today, libraries are sourcing innovative ways to introduce and foster community engagement in STEAM education - Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics. Brighton District Library has added STEAM to its offerings by installing several outdoor musical instruments from Percussion Play. Instruments are dotted around the garden area, in different 'nooks,' and include the [Harmony Flowers Major](#) & [Minor Posy](#), [Rainbow Trio Ensemble](#), and [Cyclone](#).

The library decided to include instruments that can illustrate the science behind sound. Percussion Play's Cyclone was picked as it illustrates cause and effect. Spinning the wheel will set the ball bearings inside the wheel into motion to mimic the sound of falling rain. From a gentle pitter-patter through a heavy rain shower to a full-on monsoon, players can control the intensity of the rain sound by how hard they spin the wheel, demonstrating the concept of cause and effect and encouraging gross motor skills. Next to the Cyclone, the library includes a sign explaining how the sounds are made. This provides the opportunity for caregivers to discuss the science of sound, promoting STEAM.



Rainbow Chimes



Rainbow Bongos



Cyclone

Literature, Nature and Music at Hendrick Hudson Library, NY

Making the most of its beautiful and large front garden, Hendrick Hudson Free Library decided to increase its outdoor programming and make the most of its unused outdoor space, starting with music!

Jill Davis, the library's director, wanted to create specific outdoor programs for the garden and decided that music was the answer. She decided to open the space up to its patrons and encourage music-making after discovering Percussion Play and its instruments.

When deciding on the instruments, they included the [Penta Post](#), [Rainbow Bongos](#), and [Sunflower Drum](#) – adding color to the garden. Shortly after, the library sought to honor a local father and daughter with a memorial. Both enjoyed music, and with a donation from the family, the library added the [Rainbow Cavatina](#) to the “music garden.”

Library staff were eager to bring literature and books into the space and have since created programs that encourage children to listen to stories related to music.

“Our outdoor music programs have been terrific for us and really bring together music, literature, and our natural world. We can’t wait to include more instruments and expand our programming!”

♪Jill Davis♪

Library Director at Hudson Library



Sunflower Petal Drum



Penta Post

Musical Journey Across Scenic Regional Libraries, MO

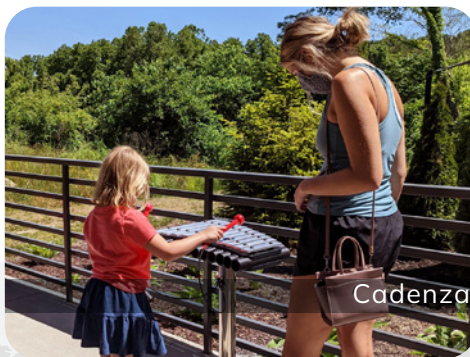
Scenic Regional Library consists of nine branches across the three counties, with the Union branch being the first library to benefit from outdoor musical instruments. When the building was built for the Union branch, this included a brand-new space for children where the library aimed to develop pre-literacy skills. Having come across Percussion Play instruments at an event, the library board fell in love with the idea of creating a space, especially for outdoor musical instruments, for everyone to enjoy.

The library was fortunate to receive money to purchase the first set of instruments, a Soprano Quartet Ensemble. This ensemble includes the [Cadenza](#), a [Small Babel Drum](#), and [Soprano Pentatonic Freechimes](#). Everyone at the library, from children to older patrons, are enjoying discovering new sounds. The 'All Abilities Rainbow Center,' which helps adults with learning difficulties, regularly enjoys their interaction with the instruments.

Christy Schink, Associate Director of Youth and Outreach Services Librarian, says "It's lovely to hear chimes outside. The noise created by children playing the instruments provides a pleasant background noise at the library. There were concerns about how loud the noise might be, but the sound doesn't carry, and we all enjoy the gentle chimes".



Soprano Pentatonic Freechimes



Cadenza



Congas

A Melodic Storywalk® at Hubbard Public Library, OH

Mary Anne Russo, Children's Librarian at HPL, had her sights on Percussion Play's outdoor musical instruments, and after a successful fundraiser, community members are now enjoying playing music on its permanent 'StoryWalk®' on the grounds of the library.

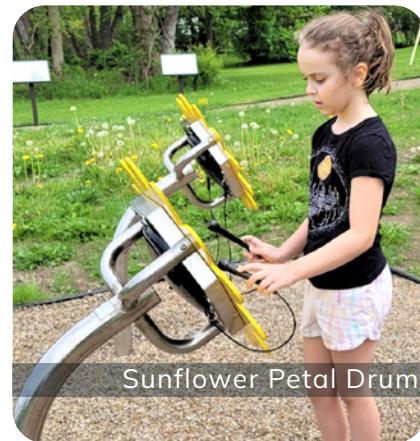
As a volunteer, Cynthia Hirtzel helps the library to fund projects. After seeing Percussion Play's instruments, Cynthia also realized they would be perfect for encouraging children to spend time outside, away from technology and screens, and reconnect with nature.

After installation, the instruments quickly became one of the garden's most popular attractions. Among them, the [Sunflower Petal Drums](#) have proven especially popular with children. But it's not just children who enjoy the instruments; everyone who comes to the library and even those who don't have a library card can come and create music. Being located at the entrance to the library means everyone sees them, and even when the library isn't open on a Sunday, families come together to make music.

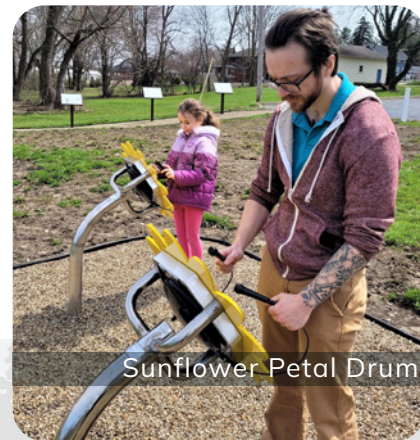
"It's all about democratizing music, and we are pleased about how accessible the instruments are. They are truly for everyone."

♪ Cynthia Hirtzel ♪

Volunteer at Hubbard Public Library



Sunflower Petal Drum

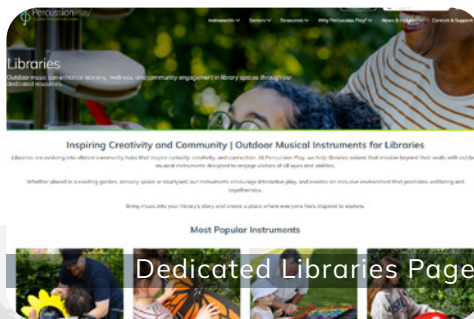


Sunflower Petal Drum

Compose a New Chapter for Your Library's Landscape

As you've discovered throughout this brochure, outdoor musical instruments can bring new opportunities for creativity, connection, and community engagement to your library. If you're feeling inspired to take the next step, Percussion Play is ready to help you turn your vision into an inviting outdoor musical space - whether that's a courtyard, entranceway, reading garden, or any area your community enjoys.

- ♪ A simple way to stay connected is to join our Percussion Play Newsletter on our [website](#), where you'll find fresh ideas, updates, and real-world inspiration to support your planning. Visit our [Library sector page](#) for more tailored information.
- ♪ For libraries seeking funding, our online [Fundraising & Grants page](#) offers practical advice and a curated list of opportunities to help bring your project to life.
- ♪ Explore our [Music Made for the Great Outdoors Podcast](#). You'll hear real customers talk about their outdoor music spaces and the positive impact they've had on local communities, along with insights from experts in education, neurodiversity, early years, multigenerational play, and more.



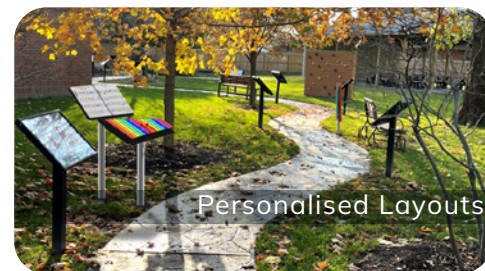
♪ When you're ready to shape your plans, our team can create bespoke designs and proposals, including interactive AR visualizations through [ComposerAR](#). These tools make it easy to present real-time layouts to donors, boards, and community partners, helping to build support.

♪ You'll also have access to personalized support and suggestions from our experienced team, who can guide you through instrument choices, layout ideas, and accessibility considerations. And to see what's possible, explore our collection of [Case Studies](#), showcasing inspiring projects from libraries and community spaces around the world.

♪ So, are you ready to get planning? With Percussion Play by your side, creating a welcoming, inclusive, and joyful outdoor musical space is well within reach. Visit our website to begin your journey today.

Ready to Bring Your Project to Life?

If you've been inspired or have a project in mind, get in touch with our library specialist, Fry. He will work with you to explore ideas, offer tailored guidance, and help you create something truly special for your library community and its patrons.





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