4. The 18-Month Innovation Garden Cycle

The Innovation Garden operates on an 18-month cycle designed to provide continuity, predictable engagement, and a clear pathway from early idea exploration to full conference contribution. This rhythm anchors the Garden's activities, ensures year-round momentum, and supports both practitioners and organizers in planning their work across seasons.

The cycle is composed of **five phases**, each with a distinct purpose and set of activities.

4.1 Tilling the Soil (March–August)

This preparatory phase strengthens the foundation for the coming Garden year.

Focus:

- Refresh templates, workflows, and design patterns
- Update forms and submission processes
- Recruit program leads, volunteers, and community stewards
- Prepare Garden Pod spaces and Guided Adventure offerings
- Align directions with the Searchlight trend scan
- Coordinate with the Knowledge Tree and conference organizers

This phase sets the conditions for a successful and well-supported cycle.

4.2 Germination (September–October)

The Garden year formally begins with early opportunities for participation and light experimentation.

Focus:

- Opening Walkthroughs in Frame VR
- First Garden Pods and seed projects

- Initial Guided Virtual Adventures
- Orientation sessions for newcomers
- Early design conversations and informal prototyping

This phase sparks momentum and invites broad engagement.

4.3 iLRNovember Bloom (November)

Following submission of Academic papers & proposals for the coming annual conference, November is the Garden's most active and visible period—its annual "super bloom." **The iLEAD community activates during this month!**

Focus:

- Weekly Walkthroughs and multi-platform Guided Adventures
- Toolshed Sessions demonstrating workflows and techniques
- Maker Panels featuring practitioners' design processes
- Proposal Clinics supporting contributors preparing iLEAD submissions
- Showcases and discussions across the Virtual Campus

This month generates an intense, supportive burst of activity that helps contributors develop strong, well-prepared ideas.

4.4 Cultivation (December–April)

This is the steady, sustained work of refining contributions and building capabilities.

Focus:

- Deepening skills through ongoing workshops and explorations
- Advancing Pods, prototypes, and curricular integrations
- Preparing and revising conference submissions
- Peer-supported iteration and reflection
- Continued Guided Adventures and Garden interactions

This phase translates early sparks of creativity into polished and evidence-informed contributions.

4.5 Harvest (May–June)

The cycle culminates in the integration of Garden work into the annual hybrid iLRN conference.

Focus:

- Innovation Garden District on the Virtual Campus
- iLEAD workshops, demos, and practitioner sessions
- Pod showcases and cross-platform demonstrations
- Preparation for Repository submission and Knowledge Tree integration
- Community reflections and celebration of contributions

The Harvest phase ensures that Garden outputs become part of iLRN's formal scholarly and community record.

4.6 How the Cycle Supports Contributors

The 18-month rhythm is designed to provide:

- Predictable, supportive opportunities for engagement
- Clear pathways from early idea to conference-ready contribution
- Multiple entry points for newcomers
- A steady cadence of skill-building and design exploration
- Integration with iLRN's scholarly, practitioner, and foresight functions

This cycle sustains the Garden as a dynamic, inclusive, and evidence-informed practice ecosystem.

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