

School Gardens

School gardens are a great way to encourage healthy habits for the students, teachers, and staff of your school. Not only do school gardens offer an exciting place to learn, but it engages the entire school community in conversation around school food, nutrition education and physical activity. Here are just a few benefits of a school garden:

Educational Benefits

Gardening offers hands-on, experiential learning opportunities in a wide array of disciplines, including the natural and social sciences, math, language arts, visual arts, and health. There is mounting evidence that students who participate in school gardening score significantly higher on standardized science achievement tests (Klemmer, et.al. 2005).

Environmental Stewardship and Connection with Nature

When children learn about water and energy cycles, the food chain, and the peculiar needs of individual species, and when they feel a sense of connection to a certain species or individual plant, they have a reason to care about all the forces that impact that plant's future. A garden offers many occasions for achieving insight into the long-term human impact on the natural environment.

Lifestyle and Nutrition

School gardening provides children opportunities for outdoor exercise while teaching them a useful skill. Gardens containing fruit and vegetables can also help to revise attitudes about particular foods. There is mounting evidence that learning in gardens is more likely to transform children's food attitudes and habits, and that school gardening, especially when combined with a healthy lunch program or nutritional education, encourages more healthful food choices. When students take their preferences back to their families, they can help to improve family consumption choices.

Active Learning and Student Engagement

Gardening activities can help engage students who are experiential learners and who have abundant energy. Hands on activities and tangible outcomes can be very rewarding and reinforcing.

Teachers as Gardeners

Teachers also learn useful gardening skills and benefit from the fresh air and exercise when they incorporate gardening into their lesson plans. For those with limited experience, many school districts and local organizations offer free training. These skills can be transferred to their own homes and social networks, thereby benefiting their personal community.

Connection to History and the Community

Gardening can tie students to social, cultural and material history of the land. Learn from local gardeners about traditional gardening techniques and native plants. Connect to local history. Study student heritage through the garden.

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School pride

Like a team sport or mascot, a garden can offer a symbolic locus of school pride and spirit. A garden offers schools a way of helping children to identify with their school and to feel proud of their own individual contribution. Children know which plants they helped to grow, and they feel proud of them. This can improve school spirit, children's attitudes toward the school and be a visual sign of school creativity and nurturing.

Resources

How to Start a School Garden

How to Start a School Garden: A Toolkit

A comprehensive toolkit for teachers creating a school garden. Offers background information about school gardens and their benefits. In addition, moves from planning, to inception, to activities involving the school garden. Also offers a list of resources for curriculum and activities around gardening.

www.healthiergeneration.org/uploadedFiles/For_Schools/1_SnacksMeals/GardenTK.pdf

How to Start a School Garden

A very basic guide to organizing a school garden including: site design, and materials. Also offers information about fundraising for the garden and how to engage students from inception.

www.eecom.net/mfsp/projects_school_garden.pdf

KidsGardening: Helping Young Minds Grow

A comprehensive database of various topics in child gardening as a whole. One section devoted to school gardening specifically that address what the benefits of school gardens are, how to gain support for them, and how to mobilize efforts at schools. In addition, there is a list of available grant and fundraising opportunities for school gardens.

www.kidsgardening.org/

My Healthy School: Five Steps to Starting a School Garden - Five easy steps to follow when creating a school garden from planning to conception and maintenance.

www.myhealthyschool.com/gardens/starting.php

Getting Started: A Guide to Creating School Gardens as Outdoor Classrooms

A fifty page look at what a garden is, what a school garden is, how it is created, and how it is maintained. Then, looks more closely at how to use this garden as an outdoor classroom and engage students in creative activities around the garden. Lastly, uses examples from schools around the country about experiences with school gardens.

www.ecoliteracy.org/downloads/getting-started

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Checklists

Starting a School Garden - An extensive checklist for designing, creating, and implementing a school garden.
www.suppersforsobriety.org/Documents/Garden/SchoolGardenChecklist.pdf

Starting a School Garden - A quick checklist for steps in planning a school garden.
<http://oconto.uwex.edu/files/2010/08/Starting-A-School-Garden.pdf>

Databases

A database of guides for each step in creating a school garden: make the case, plan for success, create the garden, learn in the garden, and keep it growing. Offers downloadable guides in each subject with easy to understand activity and lesson plans.

www.schoolgardenwizard.org/

The California School Garden Network – One of the leading school garden programs in the country. A website filled with resources on every topic in school gardens including problem solving, safety, and maintenance. It also offers an extensive network of schools with gardens to collaborate with.

www.csgn.org/create



