

# School Garden

## Overview



Transform a schoolyard space into a garden! A school garden is a wonderful way for students to physically connect with nutrition education, understand the process of growing healthy foods, and recognize environmental stewardship. A school garden can also be integrated into many subjects such as math, science, health, literacy and social studies.

## Take Action

A school garden takes some planning, but the effort is worth the reward. Here are some steps to start a school garden:

- Secure support from your school administration. Highlight the personal nutrition benefits and the crossover with various academic subjects.
- Identify a location for the garden. The garden may begin as a container garden if there is not space available or if a “start small” approach is needed.
- Budget for resources. There are many organizations that grant financial support for the investment of school gardens (like Action for Healthy Kids – Check out our [grant opportunities](#)).
- Recruit a small group of adult volunteers and older students to oversee garden activities. If you already have a [school health team](#), form a garden subcommittee.
- Determine a plan for the garden. Will every class have a plot? What seeds will each class plant? When will garden activities take place? How will teachers be involved? Will garden activities complement classroom lessons?

- When ready, implement your plan! Check in regularly as a team to identify successes and challenges.

## Social Emotional Health Highlights

**Self-Awareness:** Harvesting fruits and veggies that children have worked so hard to grow is the perfect opportunity for students to celebrate the success of their own hard work. A school garden provides chances for children to be a part of something bigger than themselves and gain self-confidence and self-efficacy by recognizing their capacity to use their skills to achieve their goals. Students will develop a sense of ownership for their health when they experience growing their own food from seed to yum!

**Responsible Decision Making:** Growing veggies requires patience, evaluation, and reflection. Students can work together to problem solve and analyze solutions to assure that all of the plants in the garden reach their fullest potential. Gardens provide ample opportunities to teach children about responsibilities in care-taking and problem solving.

## Tips



Involve as many students as possible in harvesting to experience the growing process from beginning to end. This can be challenging if crops are harvested in the summer - Consider planning a harvest celebration around back-to-school time or planting a fall or spring garden (when produce is ready to harvest during the school year)



Use your harvest to [have a taste test!](#)

## SCHOOL YEAR).



Incorporate science concepts of plant biology or writing skills by having students write about the garden and the importance of good nutrition.



Host a weekend volunteer event to help you get started. Invite school and community members to help construct planter beds, fill pots with soil and plant seeds.



Have volunteers assist with garden maintenance during the summer - weeding, watering and trimming.



Strive to ensure that students are engaging with the garden at least twice per month, either through being out in the garden or garden-based lesson plans.



Recruit a small group of adult volunteers to oversee the garden activities of students; this may be a garden club or before/after school group of interested students.



Students with disabilities can participate in the school garden project in some way, since there are many different types of tasks and various ways to adapt to accomplish them. They may need extra direction to follow the plan or accommodations for lifting lesser amounts of weight or digging with trowels rather than shovels, filling buckets rather than carrying them. They can help with placing strings for boundaries and rows of plants; fill pots with soil, pull weeds with direction. They may work with other students or adult leaders who can help them focus and follow directions as needed. Students who have disabilities that involve following directions, self-

management, or personal behavior anomalies must be supervised when using equipment or materials with safety risks.

For more activities and ideas like this one, be sure to [sign up for our news and updates](#). And if you like what you see, please [donate to support our work](#) creating more ways to help build a healthier future for kids.

## Additional Resources

[Garden Vision Planning Guide \(Grow to Learn NYC\)](#)

[Cool & Warm Season Crops \(Grow to Learn NYC\)](#)

[Gardening Resources for Kids \(Insteading\)](#)

## General garden websites

[Collective School Garden Network](#)

[Edible Schoolyard](#)

[Real School Gardens](#)

[Grow to Learn NYC](#)

[Kids Gardening](#)

[School Gardening \(USDA\)](#)

# Nutrition education curricula

[Got Veggies? A Garden-Based Nutrition Education Curriculum- For 2nd and 3rd graders \(Wisconsin Department of Health Services\)](#)

[Dig In! Curriculum- For 5th and 6th graders \(USDA - Team Nutrition\)](#)

[School Garden Checklist \(Let's Move\)](#)

[The Great Garden Detective Adventure Curriculum- For 3rd and 4th graders \(USDA - Team Nutrition\)](#)

[Lesson Plans \(Growing Minds\)](#)

[School Garden Start Up Guide \(The University of California-Davis\)](#)

## Related Activities

### **April Showers Bring May Veggies**

School gardens are a fantastic way to transition a more traditional classroom to an outdoor, experiential learning opportunity centered on student engagement and critical thinking.

### **Farm to School**

Farm to school is a national movement that helps connect kids to healthy, local food while also supporting local farmers and building communities.

## **Salad Bars**

School salad bars give students more variety and choice and allow them to try healthy options they may not have eaten before.

## **Stepping Into the Wild: Creative Outdoor Learning**

Creating an outdoor classroom is a fun and imaginative way to engage students in learning about nature and the world around us.