

Step by Step Guide to Starting a School Garden

School gardens can provide an environment in which students can learn to work with others . A school garden will function as a garden education center. The lessons that are taught at the garden site are limited only by time and imagination. There are many sources available on garden activities and exercises. School gardens are a special kind of learning center. Like libraries, they need responsible and knowledgeable people to do all the jobs necessary to maintain them as functional places in which children will learn. Below are some steps to consider when starting a school garden.

Step 1: Form a Garden Committee

Forming a garden committee will enhance the success of your program. Look for volunteers among the school staff, parents, and local residents. Or, if you know of a gardener, ask that person to volunteer, or to recommend another gardener. This is an excellent way to utilize parent community volunteers to assist with students during the garden work, to assist students in obtaining funds to support the garden, to help with scheduling educational activities finding and training volunteers, researching and disseminating information.

Step 2 ; Define the purpose and objectives of your garden

Every school garden must fulfill some need or objective. This is why each garden is unique. You may utilize the garden as a learning aid to reinforce natural science or social studies, or you may utilize the garden across all disciplines.

Step 3: Layout your students gardening activities

By determining your objectives early in the school year, you will have the opportunity to look at your lesson plans to see when and what types of garden lessons are needed. You will need to determine which groups of students will be doing what and when, and determine how bed space will be allocated. The experiences and input from your garden committee will be helpful at this stage. This is your opportunity to schedule specific activities at specific times or assign certain tasks to your volunteers.

Step 4: Define a year-round garden plan

You have identified what the school/class garden will be like while school is in session. But now, you need to think about the garden during summer break. The main question is, "Who is going to keep this garden maintained until school starts?" "How do you want the garden to look on the first day of school?" A year-round garden use plan needs to account for any school break.

Step 5: Choose a permanent garden site and design your garden

Your garden site should be in an area that receives plenty of sunlight, has good drainage, and in close proximity to water, electricity and accessible to students, volunteers, and teachers. The site should have enough room for your garden,

tool storage, and room for the students to work. Maintaining a large garden will use up all of your time and energy so start with a relatively small area.

Step 6: Build your Garden according to plan

This is the big moment when teachers, volunteers, students and their parents pool their resources and build this permanent addition to the school.

Resources for Teachers

National Garden Association-----800 863-1308
Carolina Biological Supply-----800 334-5551
Children's Garden-----415 987-0097
Green Teacher-----416 960-1244
Earth Day in Your School & Community----816 756-5686

Adapted from the internet materials of Will Green