

SUPPORTING LOCAL - SUPPORT PACKAGE

How To Grow A School Garden



So you have a garden! Now, what are you going to grow? Do you need ideas and guidance? How are you going to maintain the garden and communicate with volunteers? In this support package you will find essential topics like these along with suggestions for a successful garden season.

During the planning and building phases of the garden you probably developed a list of volunteers, whether they are teachers, students, parents, or other community members. Maintain that collaborative momentum by working on this garden plan together. You could use multiple levels of communication such as social media to spread the word far and wide. Monitor possible wildlife like insects, deer, groundhogs, or other hungry critters. A thorough garden plan can reduce vulnerability to future problems.

There are many local seed companies as well as seasonal community seed swaps where you can learn while preparing for the season. Have you thought about whether chemicals such as fertilizer or pesticides will be allowed? You may want to outline any restrictions in your plan. Consider collecting rainwater to save on costs, as well as to foster a healthy biologically active soil. There are many microbes that are required for soil and plant health. Growing a garden means a boost in biodiversity and local habitat. Your garden design could help encourage insects for a healthy food web. Make the plan step by step, and enjoy the process!



Action Plan

Step 1- Assemble the team. Collaborate with volunteers on your garden project and draw up a volunteer schedule. Depending on the size of your group, and the volunteers' commute to the garden, you may want to consider dividing the summer holidays, one week per family group. Work parties combined with community events like a potluck or barbecue are great ways to recruit, connect with, and thank volunteers. Gardens build community!



Step 2- Plan to start small. Your first year in the garden will be a building year. For beginners, the first season could be a great time to pilot a single crop such as carrots. To keep things simple, consider root crops for their low maintenance and great storage qualities. Here are some Year One suggestions: carrots, potatoes, or beets. If you want a challenge, try both an early planting and a summer planting for fall harvest. Start early with cool, quick crops which will mature before school is out for summer: peas, radishes, spinach, or lettuce. A late June planting of longer crops could include later vegetables such as swiss chard, kale, tomatoes, squash, or pumpkins. Some popular multipurpose flowers include sunflowers, nasturtiums and calendula.

Step 3- Collect tools and equipment. Once you have a garden in place, you should have the following infrastructure and tools: water access tools (hoses, watering cans, nozzle), soil, compost, adequate sun exposure (minimum six hours per day), and hand tools.

Step 4- Consider a year-long challenge or theme. Thematic gardens are fun and engaging for all ages. If you have experience on your side, consider themes such as a diverse planting of fruit trees, seed saving, permanent perennial garden beds, a Three Sisters garden, an herb garden, a pollinator garden, or a salsa garden. On the Green Schools NS Pinterest page you can see endless possibilities!

Step 5- Select crops to grow. Create a schedule and map for planting. Essential information for this plan includes first and last [frost date](#) for your area, [hardiness zone](#), days to maturity for each plant, and plant spacing. When drawing up your garden plan, keep in mind how and when the food will be harvested, stored, and consumed. This is a good time to decide how much you will grow, and whether you will contribute to a local food bank. This planning step is best completed in the late winter months.

Step 6- Plan garden tasks. Share a prioritized checklist so volunteers can refer to it on an ongoing basis. At the top of the list will be weeding and watering. Other examples of maintenance activities include harvesting, monitoring for pests or diseases, deadheading flowers, mulching, and compost management.

Step 7- Track your garden's progress. Track garden accomplishments, what is harvested, and weather events in a garden journal. It could take any form such as a blog or a collaborative Facebook page. Use lesson plans or curriculum links while in the garden. The results that your record can contribute to fantastic lesson plans! Ask about the "Lessons for the Garden Support Package".

Step 8- Network and collaborate. Talk with other school gardeners, community gardeners, and other food-related programs. There are many benefits of sharing information and working collaboratively, for example when ordering straw, compost, or seeds.

Step 9- Celebrate success, and plan for next year! As the season begins to slow in September or October, share a harvest meal and put the garden to bed. Check out the "Harvest Meal Support Package". Thank your



volunteers and contributors, and look ahead to next year's season. A few constructive notes in the fall can help create an even better garden next year.

Resources

[Green Schools Pinterest - Support Local Board](#)
[Green Schools NS Garden Resources Page](#)
[Green Schools NS Octopus Rain Barrel Activity](#)
[Green Schools NS Harvest Meal Support Package](#)
[Green Schools NS School Compost Support Package](#)
[Green Schools NS Getting Started With a School Garden Support Package](#)
[Green Schools NS Lessons for the Garden Support Package](#)
[Green Schools NS Preserving the Garden Harvest Support Package](#)

[Nova Scotia School Garden Guide](#)
[Nourish Nova Scotia](#)
[Evergreen General Garden Guide](#)
[Tree Canada Edible Trees Grant](#)
[Compost Council of Canada](#)
[Grow a Row Veggie Garden Guide](#)
[ACAP Cape Breton Community Gardener's Companion](#)
[Growing Up Organic - Vegetable Spacing and Planting Dates](#)
[WinterGreen Studios - Three Sisters Garden](#)
[Urban Farmer - What to Plant Now](#)
[Imagine a Garden in Every School](#)
[Garden ABCs](#)
[Greenheart Education](#)
[Seeds of Diversity](#)
[Seed Map](#)
[Canadian Agricultural Literacy Month](#)
[International Compost Awareness Week](#)
[World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought](#)
[Canadian Organic Week](#)
[Open Farm Day](#)

