

# SUPPORTING LOCAL - SUPPORT PACKAGE

## Preserving the Garden Harvest



When school gardens start producing food in abundance it can be overwhelming to figure out what to do with all those fresh vegetables. How can the community benefit from all that nutritious goodness without letting anything spoil? Annual food waste amounts to about [one third of all food produced globally](#), and that's a big problem! Let's preserve our harvest to waste less. Some schools have a big harvest celebration like a corn boil or stone soup event. If you find your garden produces more than you can use, you may want to make a donation to a local food bank, or explore the many ways to keep the harvest for winter.

Food preservation can be as simple as storing root vegetables in a box of sand or sawdust, or as exciting as preparing a batch of sauerkraut. Imported vegetables can usually be accessed year-round in grocery stores, for a price, so many people have lost traditional food preservation knowledge. Preserving food for winter was once a necessary survival skill. You can increase food literacy in your community by making and consuming locally produced food even during the coldest, darkest months of the year when local food is scarce. Ideally, students should be involved in this process to help promote and preserve the knowledge of preserving!

This support package provides ideas, recipes, and techniques for preserving the garden harvest. It is intended for schools with gardens and could be used by a Green Team, classes studying home economics, nutrition, or cafeteria staff. Students at Pictou Academy and Pictou Landing First Nations Schools have tried their hand at pickling leftover vegetables. You can do it to!



## Action Plan

**Step 1-** Plan to grow a garden of vegetables you want to eat, store, and preserve. Many vegetables can be frozen whole or blanched, stored with refrigeration, or in a root cellar. You can also grow plants that are ingredients in your favourite pickle or sauce, for example, tomatoes for salsa, or cucumbers for dill pickles!

**Step 2-** Harvest vegetables as they ripen and save the brightest, firmest vegetables for preserving. Take care when handling the produce so as not to bruise, or damage the produce because that will reduce the quality of your preserves, and shorten their shelf life.

**Step 3-** Choose a method of preservation that will work best for the vegetables that are most abundant. Try

gathering local knowledge such as recipes from family or elders in your community. See the resources below that provide different suggestions for preserving many different types of vegetables. Stick to a good recipe for best results. Consider the following:

1. **Explore:** Check out the food section of the library. Learn about a variety of food preservation methods, and decide what works for your produce and your kitchen: freeze, dry/dehydrate, cold storage, pickle, can, ferment, sauce, jam/jelly, chutney, cure, salt, smoke.
2. **Space:** Where will you store the preserved vegetables? Do you have enough shelf space to store jars of pickles? Do you have access to a dark, cool room to store cured potatoes and squash?
3. **Time:** There's nothing worse than getting halfway through a batch of canning and the bell rings. You might want to consider washing, peeling and cutting the vegetables in one class and canning the next.
4. **Cost:** Ensure you have all the ingredients and materials needed for your preservation project before you begin. Can you share canning tools (i.e. canning pot, tongs, jar, funnel) in the community instead of accumulating new tools?

**Step 4-** Enjoy the fruits (and vegetables!) of your labour all winter long. Celebrate the success of your venture with an event, meal, or community sale. Your team of chefs could participate in an event that features the school food product at a school lunch or at a social event like a community barbeque!

## Resources

[Green Schools NS Food and Energy Slideshow](#)

[Green Schools NS Gardening Slideshow](#)

[Green Schools NS Harvest Meal Support Package](#)

[Green Schools NS Food Miles Game](#)

[Green Schools NS Activity: Where Does Our Food Come From?](#)

[Ecology Action Centre: Adventures In Local Food](#)

[Ecology Action Centre: Three Ways to Can Tomatoes](#)

[Wholefully: How to Cure and Store Winter Squash](#)

[Grow a Good Life: 5 Steps to Storing Potatoes for Winter](#)

[Baked Potato Chips Recipe](#)

[Between the Kitchen and the Coop: Preserving Zucchini](#)

[Fermented Food Lab: Basic Sauerkraut Method](#)

[Pick Your Own: Canning/Freezing/Jams/Jelly Guide](#)

[Pick Your Own: How To Blanch and Freeze Carrots](#)

[Putting Up With the Turnbulls: Dilled Carrots](#)

[Home Storage Guide for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables](#)

[Recipes and Vegetable Storage Tips from Nourish NS](#)

[Inhabitat: Beginner's Guide to Dehydrating Food at Home Dehydrating](#)

[Mother Earth News: Best-ever Solar Food Dehydrator Plans \(for ambitious older students\)](#)

[Inhabitat: Store Your Summer Harvest in a DIY Backyard Root Cellar](#)