

SCHOOL GARDEN

Best Practices



Recruit and Develop a Garden Committee

- **Table at school events**, highlighting the garden. Include a committee sign-up sheet at your table.
- **Send flyers about the garden home with students.** Leave a contact email for families interested in volunteering with the garden.
- **Use Asset-Based Community Development** to identify individuals and groups in your community who could be assets to your project.
 - Collect a broad array of talents, not just the obvious landscapers or gardeners but also the writers, organizers, or neighborhood activists.
 - Consider recruiting neighborhood residents, science clubs, art classes, after-school groups, community service programs, and volunteer organizations.
- **Hold a formal meeting with the committee** and host regular garden “work days.”



Gain Administrative Buy-in

- **Recruit teachers and parents** as school garden advocates.
- Develop an organized and professional **parent committee**.
- Identify **long-term sources of funding**.
- **Find principals in other schools with successful garden programs** and set up a dialogue.
- **Emphasize the positive outcomes** of hands-on, outdoor education.
- Collect and present **garden-based lesson plans** that **align to the school curriculum**.



Create a Strong Garden Maintenance Plan

- **Ask volunteers to sign up for weekly increments** throughout the school year or summer to weed, water, and tend to the garden.
 - Use technology tools, like Sign-Up Genius, to make sign-up and task tracking easy.
- Set **regular work days/shifts**.
 - Keeps teachers and volunteers accountable and have a consistent schedule for students.
- **Store useful gardening tools** somewhere they can be easily accessed by volunteers.
 - Consider hand trowels, rakes, hand pruners, hoes, digging forks, wheelbarrows, hoses, and a key to the hose spigot.
- Make a **plan for the harvest**. Will produce be used in the classroom, cafeteria, or donated?
- **Communicate the maintenance plan** with the program’s landscaping crew.



Integrate the Garden into the School Community

- Share a **monthly newsletter** or bulletin. Feature the garden in the school newspaper.
- **Dedicate a centrally located bulletin board** in the school hallway for posting photos, journal entries, student artwork, upcoming events, and a volunteer sign-up.
- **Publish recipes** using garden vegetables.
- **Survey students, families, and staff** on crops they would like to see growing in the garden.
- Host a **garden party** or a **community event** in the garden.
- Present or table at school events. **Ask for specific donations**.
- Have students **create a farmer’s stand and distribute produce** at pick-up after school.



More “Tricks of the Trade”

- When designing your new garden, **start small**. Your garden can grow over time as you engage more teachers and volunteers.
- Consider **compiling a lesson plan book** for teachers or parents to pull from.
 - Use Seed St. Louis’ Seed to STEM curriculum or check out our *Curriculum Resource* handout.
- **Train all students in basic garden tasks** like weeding, watering, planting, harvesting, and cooking.
- Create **competitions out of maintenance tasks** and join Seed St. Louis’ youth contests
- Include a **gathering area** near your garden with tables and chairs.
- Try to **reuse materials**. (ex. Used Tupperware containers are great bug habitats, toilet paper rolls can be bird feeders, gathered leaves can serve as mulch covering in overwintered beds, etc.)
- **Utilize national days of service** (MLK, Make a Difference Day) for volunteers.