



BE MORE
HEALTHY CHOICES ADD UP

Heather S. Wallace, PhD, CFLE
Assistant Professor
Department of Family and
Consumer Sciences

Natalie R. Bumgarner, PhD
Assistant Professor
Department of Plant Sciences

SCHOOL GARDENS

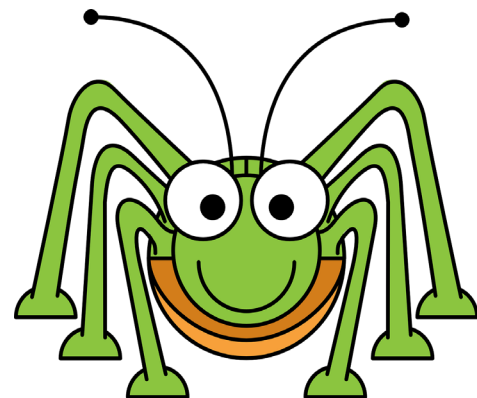
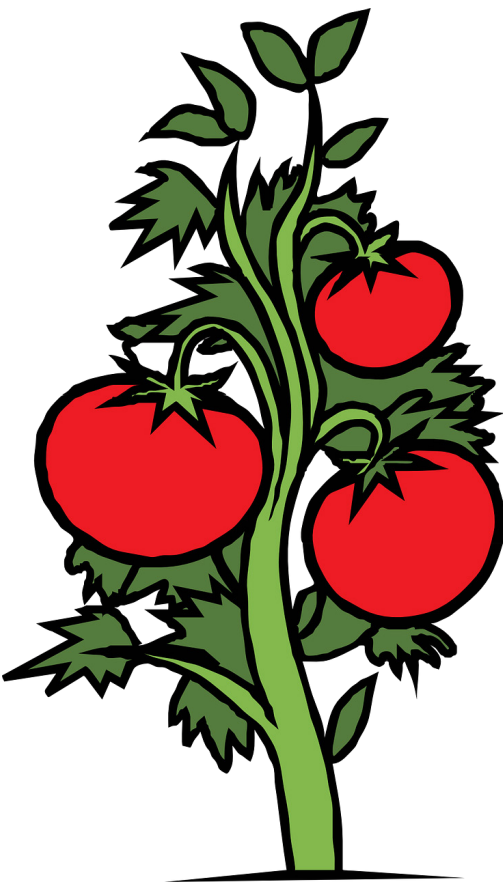
What does a school garden look like?

School gardens can be dynamic sites where students are introduced to vegetable and fruit growing, as well as exposed to the larger lessons of agriculture and the protection of the soil, water and plant resources. School gardens can be small raised beds in the schoolyard or even on the rooftop. They can also be larger plots that incorporate greenhouses and other structures. School gardens of many sizes and types can be successful when teachers, administrators, parents and community members are committed to this valuable experiential learning opportunity.



Who is involved in a school garden project?

School gardens can be a great way to bring together teachers, parents, students and school administrators. Community members are also a valuable resource for starting and maintaining successful school gardens. Extension agents and Extension Master Gardeners can provide guidance on technical questions and assist in teaching students. Local agriculture producers and businesses are also potential partners. Community and civic organizations can be helpful in building or maintaining the garden. It is important to have sustained and dedicated involvement of those both within the school system and the community.



Why get involved in school gardening?

- Gardens are excellent sites to combine physical activity with nutrition education.
- School gardens enable hands-on instruction and experiential learning in science, math and a range of environmental education topics.
- Research indicates that fruit and vegetable consumption is inadequate in most children and is related to future health risks such as obesity and diabetes.
- Preference and availability are both important when promoting vegetable consumption. Gardening may increase access to vegetables while making children more inclined to try them.
- Gardening, as part of school curriculum, has been reported to increase vegetable consumption more than nutrition education alone.
- School gardens afford students a sense of pride and accomplishment, while building community relationships.



How do school gardens get started?



- An important element of successful school gardens is to identify school personnel with a strong interest in adding this teaching tool in their classroom. No teacher can manage a school garden alone.
- Discuss the idea with school administrators and fellow teachers. A school garden can meet the educational needs of many teachers, and making sure that these needs are addressed in the early stages is important.
- Form a garden committee that can help make a plan to utilize and manage the garden year-round to best meet the needs of teachers, students and administrators.
- Determine how your school site can accommodate a garden. Evaluate soil, sunlight, water and plot size.
- Involve parents. Parents are valuable resources in maintaining school gardens, as well as partners in nutrition education.
- Include members of the food service team in your food growing efforts and collaborate on ways to link school gardens with on-site meals and nutrition.
- Be realistic in your early goals for the school garden. Success at a small level will provide opportunities for expansion, while keeping partners engaged.

Resources:

TN Farm Bureau Outdoor Classrooms Garden Grant <http://www.tnfarmbureau.org/content/grants-tours#garden%20grant>

Let's Move School Gardens. <http://www.letsmove.gov/school-garden-checklist>

Citations:

Duncan, M.J., E. Eyre, E. Bryant, N. Clarke, S. Birch, V. Staples, and F. Sheffield. The impact of school-based gardening intervention on intentions and behavior related to fruit and vegetable consumption in children. *J. Health Psychology* 20: 765-773.

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