

Children & Food: Building a School Garden

So, you'd like to start a school garden.

Great idea! Teachers and parents have found that introducing children to hands-on experiences in food-growing gardens helps them to understand and appreciate where their food comes from, make better food choices, be better stewards of the environment, and fall in love with fresh vegetables. Slow Food chapters across the country have had great success with starting and supporting school gardens.

Gather other interested people:

- Gather a small group of parents to talk about your idea and help envision what this project could be. Over time, bring teachers, community members, and others into the conversation. Host a regular meet-up for people who are interested.

Learn:

- Do your homework and learn the history. Find out what groups or committees at the school have done in the past. Were they successful? What were their challenges? Learn about your school's infrastructure. Find out what, if any, committees are already in place.
- Find schools nearby that have garden programs; visit them, talk to their garden coordinator to learn about how they do what they do. Use their successes and difficulties to guide the formulation of your own project.

Brainstorm:

- What do we hope to accomplish?
- Where could the garden go? (roof, front yard, back alley, classroom)
- What would the scope be? How could it connect to the curriculum?
- Who do we want to reach?
- Will this be integrated into the school day or be an after school project?
- Explore collaborations: See if there are other local organizations or institutions you could join forces with. Don't forget your local cooperative extension, local garden clubs and senior citizen groups.

Start small:

- At first, a "garden" can be as small as a few windowsill boxes. Don't try to bite off more than you can chew in the beginning. Sustainable growth is key!

Talk to the administration:

- Identify members of the administration, school board, or faculty who would be interested in learning more about your ideas, and who could be the key decision makers in green lighting a school garden. Then meet with them and begin talking.



If you & your team get the green light to move forward, what then?

Draft a budget:

- Be creative about possible sources and determine what could be donated (i.e. tools, seeds, time, etc.).

Plan a small and simple fundraiser:

- Not only will this help build financial support, but it will also introduce the project to the larger community.

Start a food conversation:

- Whether at the school, on your committee, or in the community, start a conversation that will help contextualize the garden you are planning. Show a movie, have a potluck, etc.

Curriculum Ideas

- Getting Started: A Guide for Creating School Gardens as Outdoor Classrooms / Ecoliteracy.org
- The Edible Schoolyard / Edibleschoolyard.org
- The Kids Gardening Website / Kidsgardening.com



Resources

Seeds

Baker Creek Seeds
Rareseeds.com

High Mowing Seeds
Highmowingseeds.com

Seeds Savers Exchange
Seedsavers.org

Movies

Nourish:
Food + Community
nourishlife.org/videos.html

What's on Your Plate?
whatsonyourplateproject.org
(with accompanying book)