

# Breaking Ground on School Gardens



## > STEP 1

### Form a Planning Committee

The first step in starting a school gardening project is to form a garden committee of dedicated people with the skills and knowledge to help make the garden a reality. Develop a strong support base by including key people in the planning process, starting with administration, teachers, parents and students.

## > STEP 2

### Define A Purpose, Objectives & Values

Kids love to dig in the dirt and often learn best with interactive, hands-on projects. Gardens are a great tool for teachers to introduce a range of educational concepts from math and sciences, to social studies and literature. Each school garden should fulfill a need or objective within the school's curricula. Be sure to identify these needs before beginning the garden project to guide the planning and implementation.

## > STEP 3

### Organize The Garden & Activities

Know your objectives from the get-go. This will help with overall planning and when incorporating activities into lesson plans. Also remember that it's important to assign work tasks to group members and allocate space in the garden appropriately.

## > STEP 4

### Create A Year-Round Plan

Remember that a garden is a year-round project. Think about what it takes to maintain the garden throughout the summer months and over holidays. Develop a year-round plan and assign tasks to ensure the garden is well maintained over the course of the year.

## > STEP 5

### Choose a Permanent Garden Site & Design Your Garden

The garden site should be in an area that gets plenty of sunlight, has good drainage, is in close proximity to water and electricity and is accessible to students, volunteers and teachers. The site should have enough room for the garden, tool storage and students to work and learn. It's okay to start small.

## > STEP 6

### Stick To The Plan

Continue to raise awareness of the garden within your school and your community. Invite staff and students to volunteer work days. Devote an area of your garden to the neighborhood garden to increase community involvement.

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## BROUGHT TO YOU BY ADVOCATES FOR HEALTH IN ACTION

Advocates for Health in Action is a group of diverse organizations and community members who are shaping the environment throughout Wake County so healthful eating and physical activity are the way of life.





## > POTENTIAL CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER

### Liability

It's crucial to consider any potential hazards or safety issues when building and maintaining the garden. To start, each garden should be well lit and have appropriate fencing to keep vandals and pests away. Consider purchasing insurance for the garden. Unfortunately, many insurance carriers are reluctant to cover community gardens. Don't let that deter you! It's crucial that the safety and wellbeing of students, teachers, volunteers and everyone involved are always top of mind. Implement garden rules to protect those working in the garden and the plants.

### Financial Support

Secure financial support for all activities and materials needed to build and maintain the garden – construction, seeds, transplants, educational materials, tools, equipment, organic materials, fertilizer and insect control are just a few. Local and national grants are available to help fund community and school garden programs. Fundraising events and campaigns are also great ways to finance a garden project. Typically, the less money dedicated to the garden, the more hands-on work is required.

### Support

Identify faculty, parents or community members who enjoy gardening as a hobby or profession. You'll be surprised to learn how many people are willing to share their knowledge and experience about gardening. Enlist horticulture help from gardening clubs, gardening centers or your local Cooperative Extension. Also try recruiting local organizations to help sponsor the garden – even if it's just a section or row. Consider what help you need the most (equipment, volunteers, money) and don't be afraid to ask!

## > REFERENCES & RESOURCES

Lots of info is available to help start a school garden project. Take the time to do research school garden programs at your library or online. Here are just a few websites proven to be helpful.

- > **The Grow Zone** – Willow Springs Elementary's school garden website provides great information on curriculum, funding sources and gardening ideas. [www.wsesgarden.webs.com](http://www.wsesgarden.webs.com)
- > **Kids Gardening** - An online registry that documents and highlights school garden projects across the nation. It also hosts extensive information about school gardening and developing curriculum. [www.kidsgardening.com](http://www.kidsgardening.com)
- > **Cornell University Department of Horticulture** – Research supporting garden based learning is available at [www.hort.cornell.edu/gbl/groundwork/researchsupports.html](http://www.hort.cornell.edu/gbl/groundwork/researchsupports.html)
- > **National Garden Association** – [www.garden.org](http://www.garden.org)
- > **The Suppers Program** – A full checklist of what to consider when starting a school garden. [suppersforsobriety.org/Documents/Garden/SchoolGardenChecklist.pdf](http://suppersforsobriety.org/Documents/Garden/SchoolGardenChecklist.pdf)
- > **KinderGARDEN** – An online resource with lots of info on how to start a school gardening program. [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/kindergarten/kinder.htm](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/kindergarten/kinder.htm)
- > **The NC Botanical Gardens** – Offers on-site education programming from school groups and on-site training for teachers. [ncbg.unc.edu/pages/22/](http://ncbg.unc.edu/pages/22/)
- > **Advocates for Health in Action** – A group of diverse organizations and community members who are shaping the environment throughout Wake County so healthful eating and physical activity are the way of life. [advocatesforhealthinaction.org](http://advocatesforhealthinaction.org)