

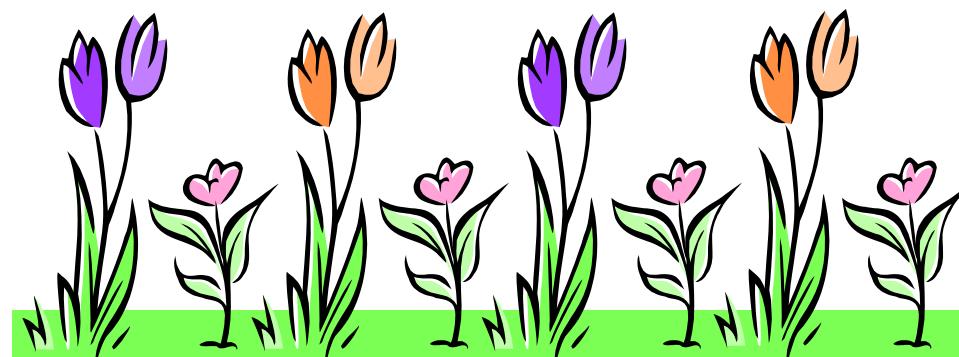
School Gardens & Parent Participation



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What is a School Garden?

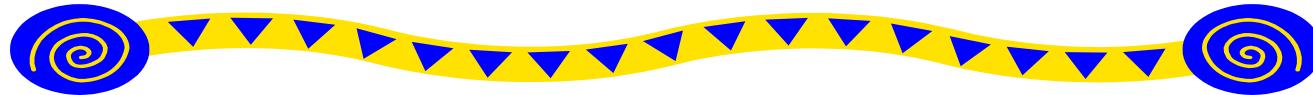
- It can be as small as:
 - a flat of seedlings in the classroom
 - potted plants set around school grounds
- It can be as extensive as:
 - an After-School Program opportunity
 - a place to introduce parent participation



Common Barriers to Parental Involvement

- **Teachers:**
 - may not know how to assign tasks to parents
 - may be overwhelmed by a busy schedule
 - uncomfortable being “watched” by parents
- **Parents:**
 - may not know their help is needed
 - may work an 8-5 job
 - may feel they don’t possess needed skills to help
 - may not speak English

School Gardens can break barriers



Gardening is a universal language.

- Parents create and assign their own tasks
- A garden setting can be more comfortable than the classroom
- Everyone has a talent to use in the garden
- Parents who take children out of the classroom may reduce burden on teachers
- Working parents can help in an after-school program



Breaking Language Barriers

- The garden can be a comfortable place for non-English speakers to participate
- Children can act as translators
- Include and welcome everyone



School Gardens & Success

Planning

- Excitement and energy are good, but having a plan is most important.
- A group of committed, hardworking individuals will be needed.
- Above All: Start Small!





Starting your Garden

You will need:

- ✓ small piece of ground & an irrigation system
- ✓ permission and support of school principal
- ✓ willing teachers who allow participation
- ✓ parents & community members to help
- ✓ A “guardian angel” to watch the garden during holidays



School Garden=Networking

- Principal & Teachers will know which parents might be interested.
- Students will ask their parents and grandparents to help.
- The surrounding community will start to notice events.



Use Understanding

- It's important to realize that not everyone will share your excitement.
- Do not pressure anyone to become involved.
- Start small groups working in the garden, and others will begin to notice.





Who Can Participate?

- Include everyone; at times a garden group may seem an exclusive “club” that is *owned* by certain participants.
- Send out invites to parents in English, Spanish and other languages.
- Ask the principal to personally invite parents to help in the garden.



{Suggested} Garden Committee



- **School Garden Coordinator:** parent in charge of running garden program.
- **Garden Coordinator Assistant:** parent who assists, fills in for coordinator; creates and distributes materials.
- **Parent Liaison:** parent in charge of contacting parents and community regarding events.
- **Treasurer:** parent in charge of monies earned for garden; may write grants.

School Garden Coordinator



- A parent elected by principal and other parents who works with the garden program for at least one school year.
- Understands gardening; previous experience helpful.
- Ability to create rapport with teachers, parents and principal.
- Compiles educational information/programs that can be used in the garden.
- Dedicates 15-20 hours/week to the organization of a garden.

Garden Coordinator Assistant

- Works with Coordinator to compile educational materials for garden program.
- Creates and distributes garden program materials to parents and teachers.
- Researches garden programs and activities.
- Able to donate at least 10-12 hours/week.



Parent Liaison



- An individual with a helpful, encouraging and enthusiastic attitude.
- Contacts parents by phone/in person on a weekly basis; informs them of garden happenings.
- Organizes dates for parents to help; calls them the evening before to confirm/remind.
- Donates at least 10 hours/week.

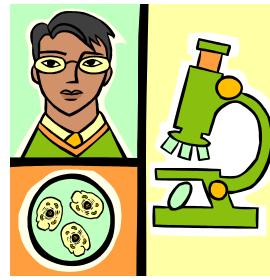
Garden Treasurer

- Keeps the “books”.
- Organizes fundraisers for the garden.
- Works with committee to decide how to spend garden money.
- Contacts community members and businesses to ask for donations.
- Works at least 10-15 hours/week.



Garden Talent Needed!

- Garden leaders: give lessons and instructions.
- Adult leaders: watch students in the garden to ensure safety.
- Garden angels: watch over the garden during summer and holidays.
- Song leaders, bug experts, seed savers, rock collectors, math lovers, science enthusiasts, etc!!!



School Garden Checklist

- ✓ One parent per 5 Students
MAXIMUM!!
- ✓ Respect for the garden should be established.
- ✓ Tool safety should be taken seriously.
- ✓ Ask students to contribute rule ideas.



School Garden Rules



1. School Garden=Outdoor Classroom please follow classroom rules.
2. There are plant places and people places. Please stay in the people places.
3. *One parent per 5 students.*
4. Please ask to pick or eat something in the garden.
5. All tools should be carried with the metal part held below waist level.
6. Rule breakers will be warned once, and then asked to return to the classroom.
7. School garden time is class time, not a recess.
8. Have fun!

Avoid “Territorialism” in the Garden



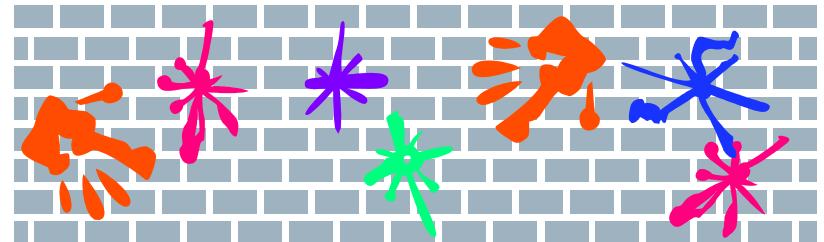
- Sharing a garden can be difficult if many groups use it.
- In the beginning there may be enough space to give each classroom a plot.
- Ensure everyone knows garden space is “flexible” and will be rotated fairly each year.
- Each group that uses the garden should respect and not bother other plots.

Vandalism

(sadly, many gardens are frequently vandalized)

Prevention Tips:

- Encourage “school spirit” and pride about the garden.
- Ask students to report vandalism in the garden to a specific teacher.
- Have students, parents and community members and parents who live nearby observe the garden in the evening.



Community Involvement

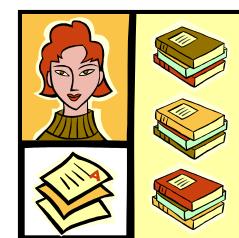
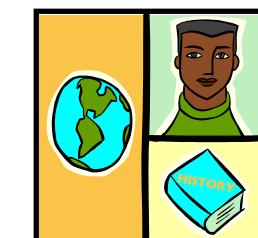
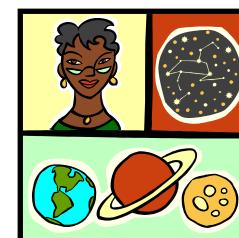
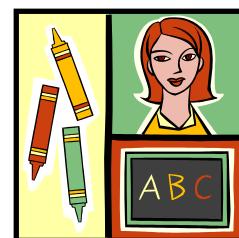
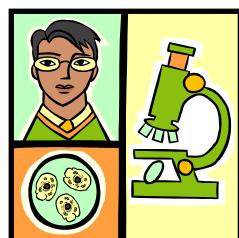
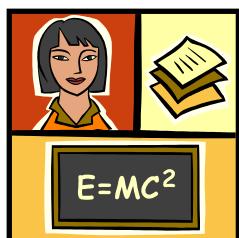
- Once a garden committee is created, advertise for more help if needed.
- Call your local Senior Citizen's center.
- Contact neighbors who live near the school.
- Remember: more help means more coordinating on the part of the parent liaison.



Getting Started

What can be taught in a school garden?

- **Math:** counting, geometry, square feet.
- **Science:** entomology (bugs), botany, critical thinking/observation skills.
- **History/Social Studies:** how plants were used.
- **Writing/language skills:** students can keep journals of what they see in the garden.
- **The possibilities are limitless...**





Sample Garden Day

- Kindergarten-1st grade: Let them dig!
Give everyone a small trowel.
- 2nd-3rd: Learn about seeds, grow beans in small cups in March and transplant into the garden.
- 4th-5th: Keep a journal of garden observations and update it weekly.
Talk about the scientific method.
- 6th: Social Studies in the garden-plant and discuss Egyptian crops like wheat & flax.



Sample Garden Day



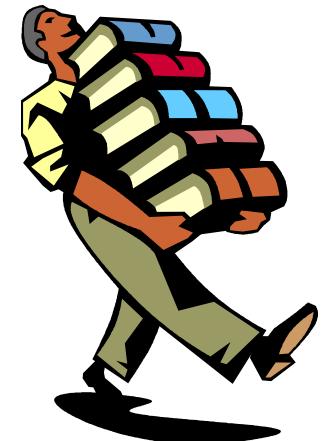
- Junior High: Science Club-gather leaves, flowers & twigs and observe under a microscope.
- High School: Career day- talk about aspects of the garden that could lead to a career. Botany, biology, pathology, entomology, landscaping, farming, etc..



Curriculum: Help or Hazard?

Many curricula available

- The amount available can be overwhelming.
- Curricula can be expensive.
- Best advice: do not rush out and purchase one immediately. Experiment with original ideas or ones found on the Internet.
- Ask the organization to allow your school to sample materials before purchasing.

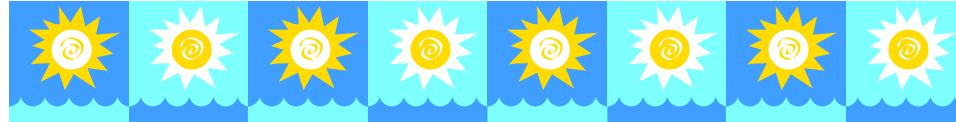


Most Importantly...

- Make sure that your school gardening experience is fun, educational and worthwhile.
- Anything that becomes a burden will eventually disappear.
- Continually incorporate new ideas and people into your program.
- Avoid ‘burnout’ by having people rotate jobs.
- Stay excited!



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Gardening Seminars in the San Joaquin Valley

- Keep in touch for more information.
- If your group has a need please contact me.
- On site visits-I'd be happy to visit your garden.