

SUPPORTING LOCAL - SUPPORT PACKAGE

Getting Started With A School Garden



Gardens offer opportunities for discovery at every step. Gardening is all about continuous learning and it helps to have a beginner's mind. If you are already beginning a school garden project you'll need no persuading: gardens are awesome! Not only is a school garden a journey for students but also for the whole community. Troubleshooting can seem continuous for any garden project but there are many helpful resources out there, including key community members. You'll be ahead of the game if you have a knowledgeable gardener on board. This support package is intended as an introduction to starting a school garden. The topic of gardening is so large that Green Schools NS has multiple resources for schools with an interest in gardens. This is the introductory guide to get you started.

Nourish Nova Scotia and the Ecology Action Centre, along with stakeholders and community members, are in the process of developing best practices for Edible School Gardens. There may be more developments on the topic of Edible School Gardens coming from Nourish NS in the near future. During a collaborative information session held in November 2016, the Themes of Essential Practices for an Edible School Garden were identified. Keep these themes in mind as you progress through the project: Learning in the Garden; Working with Nature; Celebrating Diversity; Encouraging Innovation; Strengthening the School Community; Creating a Safe Environment; Cultivating Leadership; Sustaining Programs; and Measuring Success.

Action Plan

Step 1- Keep a positive attitude! There is lots of help available. Many resources exist to help plan a school garden. Start with the [Nova Scotia School Garden Resource Guide](#) or [Nutrients For Life Learning Gardens Guide for Educators](#). These are comprehensive guides that contain valuable information.

Step 2- Talk to your administrator. Research is available on the benefits and contributions of gardens, outdoor classrooms, and outdoor education. If you need support with answering the "Why" question, please reach out to your Green Schools NS Engagement Officer. Bring your ideas, enthusiasm, and start with researched ideas.

Step 3- Talk to your school Operations or Facilities Department. You may need information such as the location of underground water lines and other infrastructure information you had not considered. Who maintains the school grounds? Who can be allies on this project? Be as inclusive as possible. Plenty of support from these contributors will help your garden not only survive but genuinely thrive!

Step 4- Build your team. Enlist your colleagues and school community to join the project and build connections. Students can start a Garden Club. Parent and community volunteers can get involved early in the planning phase. Invite people who already have garden experience or support healthy eating in your community. You could network with organizations such as [Community Health Boards](#), local community gardens, school food committees, and [Health Promoting Schools](#). Your volunteers are the sustaining contributors and can provide the support needed for a successful garden initiative.

Step 5- Secure funding. It doesn't take very much money to keep a garden going because gardens are human creations and built by working together. You may need to draw up a garden budget to kick-start the project. See the list of resources below to see some of the many grants, contests, and funding sources. You can see a grant application online for the [Learning Gardens Grant](#) from Nutrients For Life.

Step 6- Plan ahead. Once you have found gardeners and participants you can look at what you will do together. What is the scope of the project and who will maintain the garden? Find the appropriate site by planning for access to water, sun, soil, and tool storage. Drinking water, parking, and access to a bathroom are also important logistical details to consider. Many garden guides recommend conducting a soil test to ensure a healthy garden soil and site. Perhaps a high school class could assist with that test. Aside from a budget you may want to consider creating a plan for what will grow and when. Include a few perennials, like chives or raspberries, which could be donations from the community. The Green Schools NS support package called “How to Grow a School Garden” provides ideas and information on what to grow, including how-to resources.

Step 7- Build it together. This involves the “When” and “How” questions. This step requires the acquisition of tools, infrastructure, and materials. Raised beds are highly recommended. That refers to above-ground wooden frames filled with soil.

Step 7- Maintain your garden. Integrate the garden into school curriculum as you plant, weed, water, and harvest. There are many lesson plans and activities available. Green Schools NS has collected lesson plans and curriculum links in a support package called “Lessons for the Garden”. Consider creating a schedule for garden maintenance before summer vacation because that’s when maintenance can be challenging.

Step 8- Celebrate and network. To celebrate a season of learning and growing, it’s always fun to end a growing season with a school or community Harvest Meal! Ask your Engagement Officer for the Harvest Meal Support Package. You may want to combine the event with a fall work party to prepare the garden to for winter. Share your experiences with other schools and garden communities, and learn from others!

Resources

[Green Schools NS Garden Resource](#)

[Harvest Meal Support Package](#)

[School Compost Support Package](#)

[How to Grow a School Garden Support Package](#)

[Lessons For the Garden Support Package](#)

[Preserving Food for Winter Support Package](#)

[School Gardens Webinar](#) - Ontario EcoSchools

[Nourish Nova Scotia](#)

[Grow-A-Row](#)

[Ecology Action Centre Food Action Committee](#)

[NS Education Options & Opportunities Program](#)

[Compost Council of Canada](#)

[Ontario EcoSchools Links to Funding Opportunities](#)

[ACAP Cape Breton Community Gardener’s Companion](#)

[Evergreen Foundation School Ground Greening Grant](#)

[Nutrients For Life Learning Gardens Grant](#)

[Scotts Canada GRO1000 Grassroots Grant](#)

[Community Health Board Grants](#)

[Whole Kids Foundation Grants](#)

[Go Wild School Grants - WWF](#)

[TD Friends of the Environment Grant](#)

[Edible Trees Grant](#)

[The School Garden Wizard](#)

[Imagine a Garden in Every School](#)

[Greenheart Education](#)

[Ontario Horticultural Association](#)

[Canadian Agricultural Literacy Month](#)

[International Compost Awareness Week](#)

[World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought](#)

[Canadian Organic Week](#)

[World Soil Day](#)

[World Food Day](#)

[Open Farm Day](#)