

Local Foods, Lucas County

Connecting Farms, Health, and Community

School Gardens

School gardens come in all shapes and sizes. They can be as simple as a few containers on an indoor windowsill or cover several outdoor acres. Gardens not only provide an opportunity to encourage physical movement and a more active role in the food chain, but research also supports their use as a tool for developing social and emotional health. School gardens are living laboratories that create teaching opportunities ripe for nutrition and agriculture education and experiential education across all disciplines.



Planning Your Garden

The 2012 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map is the standard by which gardeners can determine which plants are most likely to thrive at a location. The map is based on the average annual minimum winter temperature.

Lucas County is in USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 6a and 6b. We have a medium length growing season, with an average last frost date of May 15th and an average first frost date of October 15th. These dates may vary a week or two, so it's important to watch the weather before planting.

Questions to Consider:

- Are administrators, parents, food service and maintenance staff, teachers, and students invested in the idea of a school gardening program? If not, how will you get their buy-in and the practical and ongoing support you need from them?
- What are your goals for your school gardening program? What topics do you want to teach in the garden, and what experiences do you want students to have?
- What will your gardens look like? Will you use existing soil or bring soil in from elsewhere? Will you be doing a soil test? Do you plan to use compost, plant cover crops, add fertilizers?

- Do you plan to incorporate greenhouses or any other structures into your school gardens? What other considerations are important in the design of your garden?
- What supplies will you need for seeding, planting, weeding, harvesting, and teaching in the gardens? Where will you store these items once you've obtained them?
- What sort of ongoing maintenance (such as weeding, watering, fertilizing, etc.) will the garden require, both during the school year and the summer? Who will be responsible for these duties?
- What do you intend to do with the harvest? Will you serve some of the garden produce in the school cafeteria or offer foods for students to sample in the classroom? Will excess produce be donated to a local food bank, food pantry or soup kitchen? What food safety training is planned for handling fresh produce?

Curriculum Connections

The school garden can be integrated into a variety of subject areas. Students can practice math skills by calculating garden bed areas, volume of soil or days to harvest. Science is a natural curriculum partner, where students can investigate plant growth, soil and insects. Literacy, art and physical education can all be paired with garden activities.

Funding Support

How much will it cost to maintain your school garden throughout the year?

Consider asking for donations of seeds, tools, and other supplies from local nurseries and home improvement stores. Coordinate fundraisers with your PTO. Send wish lists home to parents asking for donations of used tools, seeds, or even financial support.

Other Funding Sources

- [American Heart Association Teaching Gardens](#)
teachinggardens@heart.org
- [Annie's Homegrown](#)
www.annies.com/doingmore/grants-for-gardens
- [Captain Planet Foundation](#)
captainplanetfoundation.org/apply-for-grants/
- [The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation](#)
captainplanetfoundation.org/apply-for-grants/
- [Kids Gardening](#)
kidsgardening.org/garden-grants/
- [Scott's Miracle Grow](#)
scottsmiraclegro.com/responsibility/gro1000/
- [Seed Money](#)
www.seedmoney.org/
- [Whole Kids Foundation](#)
www.wholekidsfoundation.org/health-kids-innovation
- [Wild Ones](#)
www.wildones.org/seeds-for-education/sfe/

Resources for Lucas County

OSU Master Gardeners Volunteers - Extension-trained experts to answer your gardening questions online, in person or on the phone. Horticulture Hotline 419-578-6783 Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10 am - 1 pm.

mastergardener.osu.edu email: lucascountymastergardener@gmail.com

Toledo GROWS - Offers resources and technical assistance to support sustainable garden projects Phone: 419-720-8714 www.toledogrows.org
email: education@toledogrows.org

Lucas County Soil and Water District – Free educational programs on natural resource conservation, more. Phone: 419-893-1966

www.co.lucas.oh.us/lswcd email: jkochensparger@co.lucas.oh.us

Rain Garden Initiative – Assistance in rain garden construction, financial support and education www.raingardeninitiative.org
email: information@raingardeninitiative.org

Metroparks Toledo – Environmental education programs, field trips
Phone: 419.407.9700 www.metroparkstoledo.com

Veggie U – Indoor garden kits, standards-based curriculum www.veggieu.org

Online and Print Resources

Northwest Ohio Community Garden Guide
lucas.osu.edu/program-areas/local-foods/vegetable-gardening

USDA Farm to School Resources - School Gardens
www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-resources

Kids Gardening - Gardening Toolbox
www.kidsgardening.org/gardening-toolbox/

National Ag in the Classroom Curriculum Matrix
www.agclassroom.org/teacher/matrix/

University of Minnesota Extension Farm to School Curriculum Links
www.extension.umn.edu/food/farm-to-school/school-gardens/curriculum/

Print Books available at Toledo- Lucas County Public Libraries:

All New Square Foot Gardening by Mel Bartholomew
Beginner's Illustrated Guide to Gardening by Katie Elzer-Peters
Small Plot, High Yield Gardening by Sal Gilbertie & Larry Sheehan
The Kitchen Garden Cookbook by Caroline Bretherton



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

CFAES provides research and related educational programs to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis. For more information: go.osu.edu/cfaesdiversity.

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Contact your local OSU Extension office for more information.

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