

## Why school gardens?

School gardens offer a multitude of educational opportunities. They are wonderful instructional tools and engaging spaces in which to explore learning in all disciplines. School gardens serve as hands-on, interdisciplinary classrooms for students of all ages. Research has shown a variety of benefits associated with school gardening. These areas include the following:

- Academic achievement
- Positive learning environment for teachers and students
- Increase in child willingness to try and consume fresh fruits and vegetables
- Enhanced psychosocial development for youth



School gardens serve as valuable tools for educational engagement and can serve as a place to match curricular areas.

Core discipline	Example activities
Math	Measure growth rates of plants and display results on different types of charts and graphs
Science	Investigate the functions of different plant structures.
Language arts	Keep daily garden journals documenting observations in the garden such as plant changes, weather conditions and classroom activities.
Arts	Create beautiful artwork using paints derived from plant pigments or stamps formed from plant parts.
Health and nutrition	Explore the many edible components of plants, the nutrition of different plants and create delicious recipes to sample
History and social science	Investigate cultural or ethnic differences in food consumption and gardening practices.

### **What are considerations for building and maintaining a school garden?**

Healthy school gardens include input and support from passionate people who are invested in seeing the garden succeed over time. A number of questions are suggested to support planning and development.

- Who should help plan the garden?
- Who should be on the garden team once it is established?
- What value could a garden bring to Eastern Elementary? What is our common vision for the space?
- What will students do in the garden?
- How will your garden integrate with activities you are already doing?
- How much time will you spend in the garden?
- Who will plant and maintain the garden?
- Consider when this will need to be done throughout the year and who will be available.
- How will the food in the garden be used?
- What costs will be associated with the garden?
- What funds are available

### **Where could an Eastern Elementary School Garden be located?**

Access to water and at least 6 hours of sunlight are key to garden location. To date, two locations have been proposed.

Option A: Along the northeast side of the school. There could be space for raised beds and “climbing” plants up the east fencing. This space would allow a “quiet” garden area, away from the playground, allows students to see the garden from classroom windows, near the cafeteria which can support future “garden to cafeteria” efforts.

Areas to explore further:

- Confirm water access and feasibility of water to reach this area
- Does the space get adequate sun



Option B: The south end of the school, close to the water access, just northwest of the basketball courts. This space has confirmed close water access and south sun.

Areas to explore further:

- Some have mentioned a garden could be damaged due to proximity to the playground - could a fence or gate be considered to reduce this?



**When it comes to design, what should the school garden include ?**

Facilitating conversation and input with students and others from the school community maximizes ownership and ensures that the garden reflects ideas and perspectives of multiple people. In some cases, schools encourage classes to design their own vision of the garden, and pick the best elements from ideas provided.

**What are the material needs and estimated costs associated with establishing and supporting a school garden?**

Generally speaking there are several routes to acquiring equipment, seeds, plants and lumber that could include small grants, donation, reduced costs, and/or free. In many cases, these are one-time purchases or requests that support the development of the garden infrastructure.

Possible start-up costs

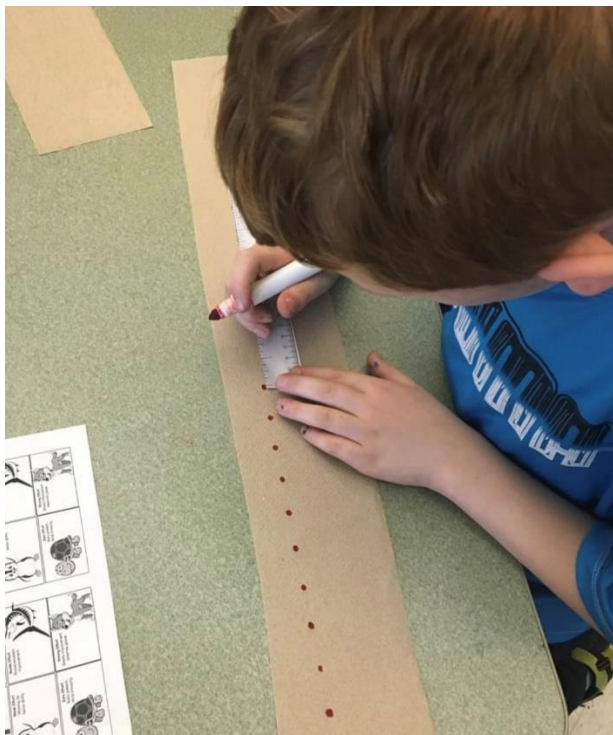
Item	Estimated cost
Soil and compost	Depends on size, 300-500
Woodchips	Typically free from TCAPS-Facilities
Hoses/nozzles	200

Hose reel	125
Watering cans	75
Wheelbarrow(2), large and child size	200
Spades	150
Shovels	150
Buckets	50
Seeds	Often free, 75-150
Perennial plants/flowers and/or fruit	150-200

**Total Range: \$1475-1750**



Tomatoes in the Traverse Heights Greenhouse and garden tomatoes on the school salad bar



(Left) A student measuring the distance between seeds for planting. (Above) Students planting seedlings they started indoors in the raised bed.



(Left) Donated compost delivery from local provider.  
(Above) Students use a garden carrot to come up with adjectives. (Below) Members of the Traverse Heights garden team posing with donated materials for a thank you note to local businesses.

