School Outdoor Garden Resource Guide

A handy guide for starting or enhancing an outdoor garden project at your school!

This collection of resources will help you design, build, and maintain an outdoor garden for your school, even if you're just starting out or looking to take your project to the next level.

Know of a great resource we're missing? Started a project yourself?
Share it with the N:OW for Net-Zero team: nowfornetzero@fesplanet.org

Key Concepts for Outdoor Gardens

- Planning & Design
- Soil Health & Fertility
- Seasonal Planting & Crop Rotation
- Water Management & Conservation
- Community & Student Engagement
- Sustainable Practices

Courses & Workshops

Growing Chefs Ontario: An in-person course where educators deliver experiential outdoor school garden lessons and support at your school (fees included).

Royal Botanical Gardens Virtual Programming: Grade-specific virtual field trips for K-12 focussing on outdoor gardens and natural ecosystems with customizable booking options.

Reading Resources & Relevant Websites

Starting a School Garden Program: Overview
A step-by-step guide to building and maintaining a successful outdoor school garden program.
View Resource

The Classroom Gardener
Professional development workshops, on-site consultations, and school garden maintenance to support year-round use of outdoor school gardens.
Learn More

School Food Gardens' Resources for Educators
Comprehensive tools and resources to support outdoor food gardens in schools.
Explore Resources

Evergreen's Resource Hub
Guides and toolkits for planning outdoor and nature-based education activities, including climate-ready school case studies.

- View Resources
- Case Studies

KidsGardening
Supports educators with grant funding, educational resources, and inspiration to engage kids through outdoor gardening. (US-based, but many applicable and useful resources!)
Visit Website

The Edible SchoolYard Project: Resource Library
Promotes academic learning and community values through organic outdoor school gardens and kitchens.
Explore Resources

Educational Gardening Resources
Curated by the University of Toronto's Sustainability & Climate Action Network, this hub includes links to organizations and educational tools for outdoor garden projects.
Learn More

Need Funding?

If you haven't already, be sure to check out our N:OW for Net-Zero Grant here and our additional funding opportunities here!

Resource Name	Description	Link
School Garden Resources by TDSB	Offers links to funding, workshops, lesson plans, and more for outdoor school gardens.	Explore Resources
Whole Kids Foundation Garden Grant Program	Provides grants for edible outdoor educational gardens and bee programming.	Learn More
Learning Gardens Grant	Encourages hands-on outdoor agricultural sustainability.	View Grant
Little Green Thumbs Grant List	Funding opportunities for garden-based education and non-profits.	Learn More
WWF Canada Go Wild Grants	Helps schools protect and restore outdoor habitats on campus grounds.	Learn More
Tree Canada: Community Tree Grants	Provides grants for tree planting and outdoor green infrastructure projects.	View Grants
Farm to Cafeteria Canada Grants	Supports healthy, sustainable outdoor food programs in schools.	Visit Website
BC Parks Foundation *Learning by Nature* Grants	$1,000 funding for schools across Canada running student-led school grounds projects.	Learn more and apply

Want to learn about how some of our N:OW for Net-Zero grantees have implemented outdoor gardens at their schools?

Visit https://nowfornetzero.org/solution-stories/

Tips for Summer Garden Maintenance

Programs and Support for Managing School Gardens During the Summer

1. **Farm to Cafeteria Canada: School Garden Programs**
   Many *Farm to Cafeteria Canada* programs include guidance for sustainable garden management, with options for involving local community members during the summer months.
   Learn More

2. **Green Thumbs Growing Kids**
   Based in Toronto, this program provides support for school and community gardens, often engaging volunteers or seasonal staff to maintain gardens over the summer.
   Explore Program

3. **Evergreen Climate Ready Schools**
   Offers guidance on engaging community partners, such as parents, local businesses, or summer camps, to help care for school gardens during vacations.
   View Resources

4. **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Partnerships**
   Schools can partner with local CSA programs or urban agriculture organizations to co-manage gardens, with produce shared between the school and the community.
   Search Local CSAs

5. **Local Master Gardener Associations**
   Master Gardener programs across Canada often have volunteers willing to care for school gardens as part of their community service initiatives. Simply search “master gardener + your province/town” to find support near you!

6. **Volunteer Coordination via School Boards**
   Some school boards have volunteer networks or summer school programs where students or staff manage gardens during the summer.

General Tips for Maintenance

Summer Garden Committee

Form a group of parents, staff, or community members before summer begins to rotate garden duties.

Partner with Local Organizations

Collaborate with community groups or local farms for shared care.

Student Engagement

Involve students through summer camps or after-school programs focused on gardening.

Automated Systems

Install automated irrigation systems to reduce maintenance needs during summer breaks.

Customized Local Solutions

Some municipalities or school boards may have unique programs tailored to their region. It's worth checking with local conservation authorities, parks departments, or community centers for additional support!

Let your garden grow, cultivating not only plants but also curiosity, creativity, and community.