

School Garden Checklist

<http://www.springfieldfoodpolicycouncil.org/k-12-garden-resource-guide.html>

Whether you're looking for a new way to capture your students' interest as the weather breaks or you simply need to add some life to your classroom or school, planting a school garden will do the trick.

School gardens offer opportunities for fun and physical activity while serving as an important educational tool to help students understand how healthy food is produced.

Before you start a garden of your own, read this step-by-step guide, which offers important information about how to safely grow your own fruits and vegetables with your students.

1. Site Selection

Finding the best location for your garden project will require some investigation. Tarmac, dry earth, mud, and empty fields can be turned into green grounds, outdoor laboratories, vegetable plots, herb gardens, play spaces and study areas. Use these questions to guide your thinking, and then decide on the garden location accordingly.

- Is the site easy and safe for both students and teachers to access?
- Is there a nearby and dependable water source?
- Is the site protected from vandals, rodents or other potential threats?
- Is the area big enough to allow for future growth?
- Is the site exposed to sunlight *at least* 6 hours a day, if planting flowers, herbs and vegetables?
- Is the soil contaminated with lead or other heavy metals?

Parking lots, courtyards, rooftops, greenhouses, and schoolyards can all be potential sites. If it is not possible to have a garden at the school, consider options within the community like city parks or vacant lots, places of worship, nature centers, retirement centers, and community gardens. You will want to avoid locations that are exposed to nearby pollutants like highways, airports, industry smokestacks, or areas referred to as [brownfields](#).

If space is very limited, consider gardening in containers. You might even find that the ideal spot is indoors instead of outside.

2. Soil Health

Soil is the foundation on which gardens are built. Good soil is an essential ingredient in a healthy school garden. It's important to collect soil samples to identify the soil quality of the proposed garden site. Have your soil tested for pH, nutrients, and lead contamination by a [soil testing laboratory](#). If your site is contaminated, the simplest solution may be to find another site or try container gardening with different soil. Contact your nearest Cooperative Extension office to learn how to take a soil sample and where to send it for analysis.