



## School Garden Maintenance Needs

### Weeding

- Pulling a weed in time saves nine! Get them before they go to seed. Cut if no time to root out.
- Know your bad perennial weeds and focus on controlling them.
- Prevent weeds in paths with heavy leaf mulch, old carpet, or landscape cloth and bark.
- Avoid bringing weeds into the garden in donated plants or by planting invasive plants.
- Watering only beds reduces weeds on paths.
- Plant in straight rows so hoes can be used instead of hand-pulling weeds.
- Plant cover crops rather than leaving empty beds that will grow weeds.
- Use adult volunteers for some weeding to avoid kid burnout.
- Avoid herbicides since kids are more sensitive to chemicals than adults are.

### Watering

- Use an irrigation system on a timer to reduce need for hand-watering.
- Have one person in charge of changing timer setting.
- Vegetables need daily water in July–August.
- Seasonally turn system on/off, drain lines before winter.

### Compost

- Add at least ½ inch of compost to each bed at least once a year.
- You can make better compost than you can purchase.
- Label compost bins so everyone can use them correctly.
- Cover bins to keep out excess wetness from rain.
- Set up a system to compost fruit and vegetable wastes from cafeteria.
- Ideal is damp as wrung-out sponge, temp 135–155, turn monthly.
- Kids can sift finished compost and spread on beds.

### Bed preparation

- Use garden forks to loosen the soil about 6–8 inches deep before planting.
- Sprinkle on complete organic fertilizer and rake in.
- Planting
  - Use flag stakes to mark planting sites or rows.
  - Mix in complete organic fertilizer at planting sites or along rows.
  - Plant 5–6 seeds for every plant you want.
  - Thin seedlings before competition is intense.
  - Re-seed as needed where seedlings failed.

### Tending plants

- Put out sturdy supports for tall plants while they are still young.
- Tie climbing plants to supports weekly. Tuck plant shoots back into support cages weekly.
- Hill potatoes weekly until they flower.
- Thin apples to two fruits per cluster.
- Cut off dead flowers. Cut off all basil flowers.
- Fertilize with complete organic fertilizer as needed.
- Seek out and kill snails and slugs. Monitor pest damage and use organic controls as needed.

### Harvesting and clearing beds of annuals

- Post info about who can harvest what and how/when to do it.
- Decide where the harvest will go and how it will get there.
- Harvest at least weekly so plants will keep producing. Pick over-ripe/rotten produce and compost
- At end of harvest, pull plants and compost them.

### Care of perennials

- Prune trees and shrubs while dormant.
- Cut runners on strawberries, thin plants annually and mulch with straw.