



GETTING STARTED IN THE GARDEN

SUPPORT PACKAGE



PURPOSE: Gardens offer opportunities for discovery at every step. Gardening is all about continuous learning and it helps to have a beginner's mind. If you are already beginning a school garden project you'll need no persuading: gardens are awesome! Not only is a school garden a journey for students but also for the whole community. Troubleshooting can seem continuous for any garden project but there are many helpful resources out there, including key community members. You'll be ahead of the game if you have a knowledgeable gardener on board. This support package is intended as an introduction to starting a school garden.

ACTION PLAN:

- Step 1: Keep a positive attitude!** There is lots of help available. Many resources exist to help plan a school garden. Start with the [Nova Scotia School Garden Resource Guide](#) or [Nutrients For Life: Learning Gardens Guide for Educators](#). These are comprehensive guides that contain valuable information.
- Step 2: Talk to your administrator.** Research is available on the benefits and contributions of gardens, outdoor classrooms, and outdoor education. If you need support with answering the "Why" question, please reach out Nourish Nova Scotia. Bring your researched ideas and enthusiasm!
- Step 3: Talk to your school Operations or Facilities Department.** You may need information such as the location of underground water lines and other infrastructure information you had not considered. Who maintains the school grounds? Who can be allies on this project? Be as inclusive as possible. Plenty of support from these contributors will help your garden not only survive but genuinely thrive!
- Step 4: Build your team.** Enlist your colleagues and school community to join the project and build connections. Students can start a Garden Club. Parent and community volunteers can get involved early in the planning phase. Invite people who already have garden experience or support healthy eating in your community. You could network with organizations such as Community Health Boards, local community gardens, school food committees, and Health Promoting Schools. Your volunteers are the sustaining contributors and can provide the support needed for a successful garden initiative.
- Step 5: Secure funding.** It doesn't take very much money to keep a garden going because gardens are human creations and built by working together. You may need to draw up a garden budget to kick-start the project.



ACTION PLAN (CONTINUED):

- Step 6: Plan ahead.** Once you have found gardeners and participants you can look at what you will do together. What is the scope of the project and who will maintain the garden? Find the appropriate site by planning for access to water, sun, soil, and tool storage. Drinking water, parking, and access to a bathroom are also important logistical details to consider. Many garden guides recommend conducting a soil test to ensure a healthy garden soil and site. Perhaps a high school class could assist with that test. Aside from a budget you may want to consider creating a plan for what will grow and when. Include a few perennials, like chives or raspberries, which could be donations from the community.
- Step 7: Build it together.** This involves the “When” and “How” questions. This step requires the acquisition of tools, infrastructure, and materials. Raised beds are highly recommended. That refers to above-ground wooden frames filled with soil.
- Step 8: Maintain your garden.** Integrate the garden into school curriculum as you plant, weed, water, and harvest. There are many lesson plans and activities available. Green Schools NS has collected lesson plans and curriculum links in a support package called “Lessons for the Garden”. Consider creating a schedule for garden maintenance before summer vacation because that’s when maintenance can be challenging.
- Step 9: Celebrate and network.** To celebrate a season of learning and growing, it’s always fun to end a growing season with a school or community Harvest Meal! You may want to combine the event with a fall work party to prepare the garden to for winter. Share your experiences with other schools and garden communities, and learn from others.

RESOURCES:

[Nourish Nova Scotia](#)
[Green Schools NS](#)
[Ecology Action Centre Food](#)
[Grow-A-Row from Loving Spoonful](#)
[NS Education Options & Opportunities Program](#)
[Compost Council of Canada](#)
[EcoSchools](#)
[Imagine a Garden in Every School](#)
[Greenheart Education](#)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

[Nutrients For Life Learning Gardens Grant](#)
[Scotts Canada GRO1000 Grassroots Grant](#)
[Community Health Board Wellness Funds](#)
[Whole Kids Foundation Grants](#)
[Go Wild School Grants - WWF](#)
[TD Friends of the Environment Grant](#)
[Edible Trees Grant](#)