



PRESERVING THE GARDEN HARVEST

IDEAS FOR INSPIRATION



BACKGROUND: When school gardens start producing food in abundance it can be overwhelming to figure out what to do with all those fresh vegetables. Food preservation can be as simple as storing root vegetables in a box of sand or sawdust, or as exciting as preparing a batch of sauerkraut. This guide provides things to consider when preserving the garden harvest.

ACTION PLAN

Step 1: Plan to grow a garden of vegetables that you want to eat, store, and preserve. Many vegetables can be frozen whole or blanched, stored with refrigeration, or in a root cellar. You could also grow vegetables that are ingredients in your favourite pickle or sauce.

Step 2: Harvest vegetables as they ripen and save the brightest, firmest vegetables for preserving. Take care when handling the produce so as not to bruise or damage it; that will reduce the quality of your preserves and shorten their shelf life.

Step 3: Choose a method of preservation that will work best for the vegetables that are most abundant. Try gathering local knowledge such as recipes from family or elders in your community. Consider the following:

- **Explore:** Check out the food section of the library. Learn about a variety of food preservation methods and decide what works for your produce and your kitchen: freeze, dry/dehydrate, cold storage, pickle, can, ferment, sauce, jam/jelly, chutney, cure, salt, smoke, etc.
- **Space:** Where will you store the preserved vegetables? Do you have enough shelf space to store jars of pickles? Do you have access to a dark, cool room to store cured potatoes and squash?
- **Time:** There's nothing worse than getting halfway through a batch of canning and the bell rings. You might want to consider washing, peeling and cutting the vegetables in one class and canning the next.
- **Cost:** Ensure you have all the ingredients and materials needed for your preservation project before you begin. Can you share canning tools (i.e. canning pot, tongs, jar, funnel) in the community instead of accumulating new tools?