

CITY GREEN

THE CASE FOR SCHOOL GROUNDS



WHAT IS A SCHOOL GARDEN?

At City Green we build raised bed gardens for schools. Raised bed gardening is when a container is built for the garden instead of gardening directly in the ground. We use raised beds because:



- They eliminate the need for soil testing. Soil, especially in urban areas, may be contaminated. Raised beds bring in fresh, nutrient-rich soil specifically designed for growing vegetables
- Raised beds warm up earlier in the spring, allowing you to start planting sooner. This is perfect for schools, since they primarily use their gardens during the fall and the spring.
- Raised beds can be built almost anywhere on most surfaces!

WHY BUILD A SCHOOL GARDEN?



School gardens are simple to construct and easy to maintain. They are a powerful hands-on learning tool for children grades PreK-12. By working outside, students are mentally and physically engaged in the material. And the plants, insects, soil and seasonal changes in the garden connect to science, social studies, health, nutrition, language arts, and math.

School gardens offer an opportunity to develop the whole child. The garden can be the starting place for learning about the local environment, encouraging healthier food choices, creating project-based learning opportunities, and making space for community engagement.

For more information, visit our website citygreenonline.org/school-gardens or email our School Grounds Manager, Emma Latham, at elatham@city-green.org

THE SCHOOL GARDEN EFFECT



Students eat more fruits and vegetables and are more willing to try new healthier foods.



Students get to go outside during the school day, and have increased levels of physical activity.



Students learn more about their local environment, food systems, and the climate.



Students show improvement in both grades and test scores.



Students show improved self-esteem, behavior management, and social skills.

(National Farm to School Network: "The Benefits of Farm to School", 2017)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

THE APPLICATION:

Teachers and administrators describe their goals for their garden, how they plan to sustain the garden, and describe their school community.

THE SITE VISIT:

After the application is accepted, City Green comes to the school for a site assessment. We discuss the best location for the garden, the number of beds, and other elements of the design. The School Grounds manager then uses this information to draft a Proposal for the school to approve.

THE INSTALLATION:

City Green comes with the prefabricated materials, tools, and staff necessary to install the garden. If teachers are interested, students can participate in filling the bins with soil to inaugurate the garden!

TEACHER TRAINING

City Green runs a teacher training workshop on how to effectively use and maintain the garden. In this hands-on workshop we review basic gardening skills, how to plan for the garden, and how to use the City Green Garden Curriculum.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

To participate the City Green School Grounds Program, you'll need the following pieces in place:

- **SUPPORT OF THE PRINCIPAL:** Administration support is a crucial component in a successful garden program.
- **THREE DEDICATED TEACHERS:** Gardens that are frequently visited are easier to maintain and offer the greatest impact to the classroom experience.
- **FUNDING:** School gardens can be very budget friendly. We will help you to strategize funding for your garden, and can provide grant funded financial assistance based on a sliding scale of need.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **NEWSLETTER:** Our monthly newsletter includes a planting guide, free garden activities, City Green events and grant opportunities.
- **SPRING & FALL CLEAN UP:** City Staff will visit your garden to lead a group lesson on clearing the beds of weeds, amending the soil, and getting everything ready for the growing season.
- **SEED PACKETS & STARTS:** Get free seed packets for spring and fall crops, as well as a tray of plant starts to easily transplant!
- **REPAIRS & EXPANSIONS:** We are always available for bed maintenance like post replacement and compost amendments. When you are ready to expand your garden, we conduct additional site visits to create a new design.
- **TEACHER WORKSHOPS:** Participate in additional professional development workshops with fellow teachers on composting, irrigation systems, and more!

CITY GREEN'S MISSION

City Green's is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to facilitating the establishment of urban farms and gardens in northern New Jersey's cities. The goal of our School Grounds Program is to provide outdoor garden classrooms, teacher training and on-going support for partner schools in New Jersey, with a focus on at-risk urban communities. We aim to to enhance academic achievement across disciplines, as well as ensure student interaction with the natural world, access to hands-on experiential learning, and an understanding of where food comes.

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