

STUDENT INFORMATION: PLANNING STAGE

INTRODUCTION

Growing your own food can be a great way to save money, reduce your carbon footprint, and control the food source. It can be a successful and rewarding activity if planned properly, however there is much to consider and understand from construction to chemistry. Your task is to create and present a proposal for a school garden project. Your proposal will be presented to the class and will include research and the soil test results supporting your decisions.

NOTE: For each component of this activity make sure you have justification and evidence to support your decisions. This can include, but is not limited to photographs, videos, and webpages. Make sure you cite your research sources appropriately.

PART I. PLANNING

Your group must first determine the logistics of your garden. Use the **USDA School Garden Checklist** as a guide. Each group member will be responsible in leading the team in researching one of the areas below. All students will assist with these areas, however each student will choose one area in which to serve as lead on that aspect of the project.

1. EVALUATE YOUR AVAILABLE SPACE

Lead Student _____

Your role is to evaluate the possible locations that could be utilized to build a garden.

To help determine the best uses for the space available, evaluate:

- 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 for future growth?
 - *What will be it's size and shape?*
- 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?

2. FINDING RESOURCES, MAKING PARTNERSHIPS

Lead Student _____

Your role is to find resources and community partners to help provide the funding and/or supplies needed to construct and maintain the garden. Forming local partnerships is an excellent way to leverage resources and gain access to needed materials, tools, funding, volunteers and technical assistance.

To help gather adequate resources consider:

- What will we need to build the garden?
- What will we need to maintain the garden after it is built and we are growing plants?
- What existing resources are available on campus?
- What community members/businesses could I contact that would be willing to donate materials and/or plants or seeds?
- What community members/businesses could I contact that would be willing donate funding to support this project?

CHECKING SOIL HEALTH

Lead Student _____

Your role is to lead your group through the process of collecting and testing the soil for the possible garden site as well as other sites identified by your instructor.

Good soil is an essential for a healthy school garden. It's important to collect soil samples to identify soil quality for the proposed site.

Follow your instructor's direction to complete the soil tests.

Things to consider:

- What is healthy soil?
- Is it possible to improve soil health?

DESIGN CHALLENGE

Lead Student _____

Your role is to help your group design the School Garden.

Hold a brainstorming session; get everyone's ideas and design concepts and develop one design plan.

Consider the following:

- What will the garden look like?
- Will this space be used for more than gardening?
- What types of plants will you be planting?
- How can you most effectively and efficiently use the space?

School gardens provide:

- food for improving children's diet and nutrition
- healthy influences – physical activity, ingredients for school meals
- an area of learning – about nature, agriculture, nutrition, math, and other subjects
- a place of pleasure and recreation – flowers and shrubs, play areas, shade, eating areas
- a continuing lesson in respecting the environment and taking pride in one's school
- a gathering spot for your community to socialize

PLANT PALETTE

Lead Student _____

Your role is to help your group select plants that are most appropriate to grow in your garden.

Choose a palette of plants that are safe, healthy, low maintenance, desirable in size and shape, and suitable to your climate. Have older students survey younger students about what plants to grow. *Helpful hints: Do you know your growing zone? Find it by using the USDA's Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Try selecting plants based on a theme, such as a storybook or science lesson, to connect with what is being taught in the classroom.*

Consider the following:

- What types of plants will grow in your area?
- What are the requirements for your plant to grow?
 - Sunlight
 - Water
 - Soil
 - Nutrient content
 - Composition (i.e. sand, silt, clay)
- How long will it take for the plants to grow?
- What is the purpose of growing these types of plants?
 - Flowers
 - Vegetables

PART II: SCHOOL GARDEN PROPOSAL

When you have completed your research and planning your group will need to prepare a proposal. Your teacher will specify what your proposal should look like and what format it should be in, but your proposal should include at least the following information with evidence and justification:

- Budget (where will this money come from?)
- Location
- Size
- Shape
- Vegetable varieties grown
- Soil requirements
- Irrigation
- Impact (number of people that will be fed)
- Management (Site/soil preparation, watering, weeding, pest control, harvesting, etc.)
- Potential health benefits
- Potential environmental benefits
- Potential community benefits

Create a detailed labeled blueprint of your garden proposal. This can be created on paper but an image of this is required to be included in your final presentation.