Purpose of the Garden

Articulate what the garden is for. Examples: science curriculum, food production, waste reduction education, watershed education, beautification, physical education, improving community access to nutritious foods, learning where food comes from, history lessons, or spontaneous learning?

Garden Elements

Garden Elements	What do you want in your garden	Priority
Gathering area		
Raised beds or in ground beds*		
Annual flowers and vegetables – types		
Perennial herbs, flowers, trees or fruits		
Tool Shed storage area		
Green house or seed starting area		
Water supply – hoses		
Composting area / worm bins		
Food Prep area		
Native Plant Area		
Fencing		
Special Features: weather station, pond, art, sun dial, signs?		
Elements for pest control: insectaries, plants, row cover, netting		
Instructional materials storage and garden schedule/ calendar location		

* **Raised Beds vs. In Ground Beds**

Raised Beds

Pros: can make accessing vegetables easy for ADA students; provide a physical boundary that keeps students from stepping on the soil around plants.

Cons: Raised beds are more expensive and non conducive to growing all crops. Care in wood choice should also be taken to avoid the risk of splinters and provide for longevity (cedar/redwood lasts longer)

PRESSURE TREATED LUMBER SHOULD NEVER BE USED IN FOOD GARDENS

Ground Beds

Pros: ground beds are a minimally expensive option and can achieve good fertility from sheet mulching. Unlike raised beds they are conducive for crops such as squash, potatoes and corn (although these can also be grown in raised beds)

Cons: These beds are not ADA accessible. Ground beds are often difficult for students to keep their feet off of, leading to some frustration. Also, there is generally more weed/grass removal needed.

Location Considerations

___Space – size depending on goals – food production for cafeteria vs. science lesson enhancement

___Slope – consider drainage and erosion. Locating near a stream not recommended because it can become waterlogged

___Be sure there is no problem related to wells, septic systems, in-ground tanks

___Soil must be tested for lead if there are pre-1978 buildings close by.

___Area for containers, if space is very limited

___8 hours of direct sun for fruiting crops and 6 hours for leaf crops and herbs is necessary. You want the garden to be on a south facing location; avoid placing it on the north side of buildings

___Water source must be very convenient w/in 15 ft. Watering takes place ideally very early in the day. Consider mulching to reduce use.

___ Truck Access for delivering loads of compost, soil, mulch etc.

___Mowing space to ensure accommodation for turning mower machines

___Drainage - Avoid damp spots and steep spots. If drainage is not good, do raised beds. If sloped consider terraces

___No competition from trees and roots for water, soil and sun

___High visibility location is important for PR value and to avoid loitering/vandalism. You want the public to see your garden.

___Consider afterhours access to the garden if it is in a courtyard or secured area.

___Located close to the school or teachers may not use it as readily

___Avoid high traffic/pollution areas which can leave pollutants on the plants

___Protection - What might threaten the garden - people, wind or pests? You should Plan for protection.

Funding Considerations:

Typical new garden expenses include:

- raised bed materials - posts, boards, hardware (screws, braces, nails etc.),
- fence materials, sealant for wood fence,
- pathway materials (weed barrier and covering bark or pea gravel)
- irrigation pipe and drip system,
- compost, soil

Typical garden equipment includes:

wheel barrow, hose, seeds, starts, soil amendments, trellis materials, buckets, trowels, shovels, gloves, pitch forks and the garden shed to contain everything.

You may also want to consider cold frame or other season extender hoop structures (pvc pipe and plastic or ag cloth).

Many materials can be donated and volunteers can help construct the garden. Be sure the effort to raise funds and donated materials and labor is organized and consistent and there is follow up with thank you letters.

Construction:

Once a location, design and budget are determined, a date allowing at least 6 weeks of preparation, should be set for construction. The effort to fundraise, (if necessary) and gather donated materials and volunteers should start immediately.

See our guide for new school garden work party preparation.