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# Learning Gardens in Guilford County



## Why Learning Gardens?

A garden is an outdoor classroom: a living laboratory where gardeners of all ages learn by observing and doing.

Gardening offers real world, problem-based learning opportunities in every discipline, including the natural sciences, math, language arts, and nutrition.



## What are the Benefits of a Learning Garden?

**Inquiry-based learning:** Learning gardens are learning labs that can enrich every part of a school's curriculum.

**Community:** Build school pride through taking ownership. Involve whole families; this is for gardeners of all ages!

**Health:** Kids are more likely to eat something that they have grown, and gardening exposes kids to a variety of new food! Gardening also decreases stress and increases physical activity.

**Life Skills:** In addition to a wealth of plant growing information, gardening teaches cooperation, responsibility, perseverance, and hard work.

**Entrepreneurship:** Some schools fundraise by selling produce or seedlings that they grow.

**Nature:** Connect with plants, pollinators, birds, and life cycles in the garden.

## Guilford County School Garden Network

The Guilford County School Garden Network brings together community stakeholders to create and sustain school gardens in Guilford County.

### Networking with other educators

- Connect to others providing garden-based education to share successes, best practices and questions on the SGN Facebook page and in-person at events.

### Professional Development & Workshops

- Seasonal gardening information and growing techniques.
- Specific garden curriculum and integrating the garden with standards.

### Monthly E-Newsletter

- Receive grant opportunities, upcoming events, garden-related curriculum and activities.
- Join us! Sign up: [guilford.ces.ncsu.edu/community-and-school-garden-network/](http://guilford.ces.ncsu.edu/community-and-school-garden-network/)





## Steps to Success

### 1. Gather your Team

- Build a garden team of 5 to 10 people, including support from teachers, students, administration, and families. People keep a garden growing — this is about sustainability!

### 2. Integrate the Garden

- Ask: Why is a garden right for us? What are our goals? Will the garden connect to specific standards?
- Who is our garden for? When in the school day will it be used?

### 3. Find a Garden Site (and Permission!)

- Easily visible and accessible for teachers and students, 8 hours of direct sunlight, and close access to water.
- Work closely with your school's facilities department and administration about permits, drainage, mowing, and other requirements.

### 4. Develop the Garden

- Design the garden with students and teachers! Start small and build on success. Developing in phases is a good way to go.
- Identify partners who can help with resources and funding. See listed grant opportunities.
- Plan: How will the garden be maintained? Will each class have their own plot, will it be a communal garden, or some combination? Develop leadership roles and garden guidelines.

### 5. Build Community Year-round

- Hold school-wide workdays, workshops, and garden celebrations.
- Share successes (and pictures!) with the School Garden Network Facebook page!

## Resources through Extension

### Gardening Questions

Contact the Extension Master Gardener<sup>SM</sup> Volunteers (EMGV) Infoline (336)641-2404 or [guilfordmg@gmail.com](mailto:guilfordmg@gmail.com).

- Research-based answers for any gardening question
- Help understanding soil sampling and soil test reports

### School Garden Mentors

Extension Master Gardener<sup>SM</sup> Volunteers (EMGV) offer school garden mentors who can provide support with:

- Garden site selection and planning
- Advice on garden team development
- Plans for garden construction and planting
- Best practices for gardening with youth

**Attend Free Gardening Classes or Request a Garden Workshop for your School** offered by Guilford County Cooperative Extension and Extension Master Gardener<sup>SM</sup> Volunteers.

- List of classes at [guilfordextension.com](http://guilfordextension.com), under "Free Gardening Classes".
- For more information, call Guilford County Cooperative Extension at 336-641-2400.

### Community & School Garden Agent

County Extension Agent Quina Weber-Shirk:

- Training for community gardeners
- Technical assistance with sustainable gardening and community building
- Site visits to community gardens

### Volunteers in your Learning Garden

Share volunteer opportunities in your school garden through the Volunteer Center of Greensboro's Reducing Hunger Through Service Program.

- Contact County Extension Agent Quina Weber-Shirk to post your need.

### Seed Donations

- *Seeds to Share* is an event for school and community gardens to receive free herb, vegetable, and flower seeds for their gardens. The event is the first Saturday in February in Greensboro and the second Saturday in February in High Point.

### Gardening and Nutrition Curriculum

- *Guilford County 4-H*: standards-aligned, hands-on classroom curriculum for K-12 (some with rentable kits), contact our office at (336) 641-2400



## Get Involved!

Find more information on our website:

[guilford.ces.ncsu.edu/community-and-school-garden-network/](http://guilford.ces.ncsu.edu/community-and-school-garden-network/)

- Gardening and nutrition lessons and activities for youth aged 3-18 (PreK-12)
- Best practices for gardening with youth
- Research-based gardening information
- Grants for learning gardens

### Support or start a Learning Garden

- More than 80 school gardens have been started in Guilford County!
- Call County Extension Agent, Quina Weber-Shirk, and she will connect you with a garden.

### Join the School Garden Network

- *SGN Facebook page*: [www.facebook.com/gccoopextsgn/](http://www.facebook.com/gccoopextsgn/)
- *Monthly E-Newsletter and Events*: Sign up at [guilford.ces.ncsu.edu/community-and-school-garden-network/](http://guilford.ces.ncsu.edu/community-and-school-garden-network/)



GC School Garden Network

