



Rock 'n Renew advocates the use of plant-based learning across the curriculum. Training teachers to incorporate the use of outdoor gardens, natural settings and plant activities in their classroom lessons achieve this goal. Our goal is to help make plant-based learning a part of every school child's education.

An Overview of Rock 'n Renew Garden Programs

Rock 'n Renew can help your school to plan for, design, install and maintain gardens of all styles, purposes and sizes. Rock 'n Renew has a strong commitment to gardening with schools because of a belief that a school garden is an important platform for active, interdisciplinary student learning.

So, are you interested in starting a School Garden?

If you are interested in beginning a school garden, the staff at Rock 'n Renew can help you turn your school's gardening visions into a real-life outdoor classroom. Following is a detailed description of what steps are necessary to start a school garden, design ideas and more.

1. Goals

The goals and objectives of our school gardening efforts are to help schools establish and develop the following:

- a site leadership team
- a working garden for use as a living laboratory to support teaching and learning
- a student body engaging in active discovery through interdisciplinary learning

2. Planning and Design

To achieve these objectives, Rock 'n Renew's staff will facilitate a participatory design process with students and teachers prior to garden construction. Meetings with educators and students determine how they wish to use the garden for class activities, where the garden will be located on their school campus and what features and plants they would like the garden to have.

A concept plan is developed from teacher and student ideas to reflect their vision and this conceptual plan is presented to educators and students for continual feedback and approval, including identifying ownership zones for individual classrooms that adopt portions of the garden.

3. Construction and Planting

Garden construction focuses on building the infrastructure needed for planting (possible raised beds, soil preparation, tree planting, etc). Rock 'n Renew works with the school to accomplish this phase while teachers and students observe the process through tours and aid in measurements and procuring materials for the project.

The second phase of garden construction is planting, which is done by the school's students, teachers, parents and staff with assistance from Rock 'n Renew's staff.

4. Training

Teacher training is integral to the school garden becoming part of the school's culture and attendance at several teacher workshops is recommended as a supplement to the garden planning process. Supplemental training sessions serve to introduce the curricular connections to the garden and illustrate how to weave garden-based activities into existing curricula. Rock 'n Renew's staff can help teachers determine how to modify activities to fit into or replace their current lesson plan.

5. Assessing Your Needs

Answering these key questions will set the tone for your school's garden space. Answer the what and how questions...

6. Creating a Vision & Analyzing the Garden Site!

Garden site analysis is the basic process of getting to know your existing conditions and assessing what will stay, what will go, and what should be modified. A base map serves as a foundation to guide your garden design, and will help you choose the right features and plants for your site conditions, and keep everything in scale. Think about composting, drainage and existing features of your future garden site!

Holding a Vision Meeting

Once the area has been surveyed and a site has been selected, the school can begin to envision their ideal school garden. The school garden team should hold a vision-creation session to formulate a better idea of what the garden should become. This exercise serves to generate discussion among teachers and students about the character of the garden, its primary uses, and the school's priorities for the space. The outcome of the Vision Meeting will be a mission statement and concept design for the garden and should be included in your proposal.

Do it democratically!

In addition to team members, invite other faculty, student representatives, a few interested parents, and active community members as appropriate so that everyone who is impacted by the garden has a voice in the planning process. Including a range of perspectives will result in a greater depth of information and will generate good will as well as increased support and participation in the entire school community.

Scheduling

Schedule the Vision Meeting at a time when most participants can attend, ideally setting aside at least 90 minutes for the exercise.

Roles

- Assign one team member to act as a facilitator.
- Another garden team member should take notes and be prepared to transcribe them so that no valuable ideas are lost.
- A third team member should keep track of the group's comments on chart paper, chalkboard, or another large writing surface, so that all can see and react to the input.

Start the session: A facilitator begins discussion by posing some open-ended questions to the group. Participants should be encouraged to consider a broad range of educational applications of the garden, including its application to math, geography, english, as well as biology and ecology.

Determining Your Goals Worksheet

This worksheet is intended to be a guide for you to summarize your goals for the entire garden project: Garden as a learning environment * School garden team * Garden maintenance needs * Teacher training * Student involvement * Parents, community, networking, etc...

Forming a School Garden Team

Assembling a motivated, committed school garden team can be the key to building a garden that endures for years. This team should consist of a core group that will be the most active participants in planning as well as others who may play an important but more peripheral role, or who may address some of the diverse constituency of learners who will be using the garden. We recommend a minimum of six people to form the core of the team.

1. The Facilitator need not play as active a role in gardening as teachers and other school members, but they should be “on board” to support the idea and key needs.
2. Garden Coordinator may be a teacher or parent who is a gardener, and who has time available to dedicate energy to make calls, recruit help, find and order supplies.
3. Planting Day Leader is an ideal job for someone who can be involved heavily, but for only a short time, as it is a specific event-oriented responsibility. (This position can rotate to include a new individual every year.)
4. Resource Leader can be an enthusiastic parent volunteers or can form a sub-committee for School Garden Education Resources.
5. The Parent-Teacher Liaison should be a person who is knowledgeable about the garden, and who is also comfortable speaking before groups.
6. Fundraiser/PR Leader might begin with seeking donations or in-kind support from neighborhood businesses and organizing a school fundraiser.

Go Team Go!

Remember... All team members should attend their own garden team meetings and teacher training sessions, work actively with students during planting days, and take responsibility for overseeing maintenance of the garden during the school year and summer. Responsibility for the school garden’s continued success and sustainability ultimately rests under the leadership of the school garden team. The school may face some challenges in keeping the garden growing strong on all fronts, but these issues can be overcome.

****Rock 'n Renew complies with the Primary School National Standards in Science, Math, Social Studies, Geography and English/Language Arts Standards!**

Composition

This is the overall garden, the overall impact of the space, and how all of the features and areas work together to create a whole.

Understanding Your Climate

Where you are located in the country dictates your climate, or the overall weather and temperature conditions in your area. Climate also affects what activities you may be able to do during a given season. The term “growing zone” is used by the nursery and gardening industry as a common reference point for determining the range of a plant.

Do I Really Need Drawings?

Yes. A plan drawing of your school garden is a sketch of the space and your proposed use for it. A plan drawing is a critical and valuable communication tool and allows you to show teachers and students what will be built, including the location and size of the individual classroom beds so they can start planning their crops. Your base map can also be called a scale drawing, where: 1 foot in real life = 1/4 or 1/8 inch on graph paper.

Tip: Having a plan drawing provides a great fundraising tool! If you can show potential funders your plan, then they know you are serious and have given careful consideration to your project, and therefore will be more likely to help with funding.

Include Everyone in the Process

It is highly recommended that a school garden team use an “inclusive design process” to collect input from all members of the school and incorporate the collective ideas into a design for the school garden that represents everyone who will be using it. The inclusive design process invites teachers and students to contribute creative ideas and provide input in the final design before garden installation.

Hold a Design Workshop

Organize a Design Workshop that relies on the inclusive design process whereby all participants can openly discuss ideas. A well run Design Workshop generally results in strong feelings of ownership and pride in the garden and the school. The Design Workshop is about garden design, a plan for building it, and plant selection.

Getting the Entire School Involved

The school garden will be at the top of your mind, but may not be at the forefront of the minds of those in the school less involved. The more you can bring it to their attention and get them thinking about it, the more connections will be developed, and the more the garden will be used.

Here are some ideas for keeping the garden on people's minds:

- Incorporate the garden as a teaching tool even before it is built.
- Ask the students for their ideas of what should be in the garden – and then really listen! Most students have great ideas about possible garden designs or features, but we tend to think that as adults we know what is best
- If the faculty has established the primary educational goals, put those forth to the students and invite their design ideas, so that the resulting garden will naturally support the education goals with the students at the center.
- Promote the project to parents in the school newsletter and the student newspaper.
- Recruit classes to sign up for Planting Day. Ask if they want to have ownership of a particular garden area for long-term maintenance.
- Involve the art classes in producing outdoor art for the garden.
- Ask younger students to start seeds on their classroom windowsills. It's difficult to grow seedlings without a grow light, therefore it's beneficial to have one in your classroom. If heavier construction projects are to be done by a contractor, have the students come out and take tours during this phase.
- Make sure the students do any work that is possible for them to do – including moving wheelbarrows or pails of compost to amend soil; planting the smaller shrubs, perennials, and annuals; and mulching the beds.
- Celebrate the garden with refreshments and special events once it's planted.
- Visit the garden regularly with your class, whether for active investigation, quiet reading time, or simply to observe and write in their journals.

Organizing Planting Day

Once the infrastructure of the garden is in place, consider holding a one-day planting event for the students to plant the garden. This celebratory event is important, as it allows everyone to get their hands in the garden and claim part ownership.

1. Select a day with a backup rain date (just in case).
2. Schedule classes to arrive at the garden and work in 30-40 minute shifts.
3. Assign a specific area of the garden for each group to plant, preferably an area that relates to that group's curriculum or that they intend to care for throughout the year.
4. Use any extra time to deliver a lesson plan on gardening, nature, or anything related to the work they are doing.
5. Be sure to allow enough time for students to clean up before returning to their classrooms. (Otherwise, you've got a major chore at the end of the day!)

Children's Garden Themes

Vegetable Snack Garden: Encourage children to grow fruits and vegetables that they would like to taste. Discuss when to plant/harvest vegetables in the garden and learn about plant life cycles. *Wildlife Garden:* Incorporate a tree with berries for the birds in your garden. Install a birdbath or birdfeeder outside a classroom window.

Garden Chores & Maintenance

Garden work does not end after construction and planting. A successful school garden is well maintained and survives past the first few years. Recruiting enough help for steady garden maintenance—particularly during the summer—may prove a significant factor in achieving sustainability. Two critical components of good garden maintenance are leadership and a good plan.

Creating a Garden Responsibility Plan

The school garden team needs to create a Garden Responsibility plan for keeping the garden watered, weeded, and cared for throughout the calendar year. The Responsibility Plan can give tasks of weeding and watering to different classrooms on a rotating basis, put a student garden club in charge of garden care after school or outline the plan for summer/holiday maintenance schedule. Each school garden team must address its maintenance needs according to available resources both inside the school and in the larger school community.

Create a School Garden Weekly Garden Schedule

Which would include the name of the Summer Maintenance Coordinator, daytime phone number, the week dates, the tasks and challenges.

Commitment to Integrate Curricula

Integration of the garden across the teaching curricula over multiple grade levels is essential to success. The school garden is a natural forum for cross-disciplinary connections, enabling fluid learning across the curriculum. Plant-based activities based on a school garden or outdoor habitat support a variety of learning styles and abilities and are always hands-on and engaging, real-life learning endeavors that help kids gain lifelong skills in a natural environment.

Ongoing Fundraising

Obtaining funding to expand the garden and its programs is necessary. Tools, materials, expertise, and labor are all required to sustain a garden and its programs, and these items cost money.

Conducting an Evaluation

Conducting a self-assessment, is much like assessing student performance. Student assessment actually begins as the teacher writes a lesson plan. In the process, she identifies goals and objectives that will demonstrate whether the students have learned the new content and skills.

Try these online resources to search for local school garden initiatives:

<http://www.communitygarden.org> * <http://www.ahs.org> * <http://www.jmgkids.com>

School References:

Rock 'n Renew is currently working on garden projects at all 12 schools in the Bayonne School district.

Patricia L. McGeehan, Ed.D. Superintendent of Bayonne Schools
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Dr. McGeehan can be reached through her assistant: Liz Fiadini; LFiadini@bboed.org

Middle School Science- School 14, Bayonne, N.J
Rock 'n Renew built a school garden for the school 14's Gifted & Talented program.
Barbara DeBenedictis; BDeBenedictis@bboed.org

Rock 'n Renew began working with The Browning School in 2006.

The Browning School
Chris Dunham; Middle School Head
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Sag Harbor Elementary School
Nina Landi; Kindergarden Teacher
High School for Enterprise, Business and Technology

The Grand St. Campus
Brooklyn, NY
Kenneth McGlaughlin

The Green School

Other schools Rock 'n Renew works with:

Churchill School * Columbia Grammar School * PS 112 Lefferts Park * PS 121 Throop *
The Chidrens Workshop School, NYC * Stone Robinson Elementary School, Char-
lottseville, VA * The Crossroads School, Santa Monica, CA * Bronx Community College
* Illinois Wesleyan University * South Seneca School District * Syracuse University *
Utah State University * Louisiana State University * Missouri State University * Uni-
versity of Guelph * Fresno City College * Virginia State University * C.W. Post College
of Long Island University * LaGrange College * University of Illinois - Springfield *
Wilmington College

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