

## FRESH from the Garden

### Sweet Potato Competition

Kids love a healthy competition. We were so inspired by the blue ribbon-winning State Fair entry from Dixon Road Elementary last year, we thought we'd host our own sweet potato competition. Entry details are below. All entries must be received by Wednesday, October 4. Ribbons will be awarded to 1st and 2nd place for each category. Winners will be notified by October 16.

Follow the specific directions for each category. There are drop-off and online submission options to encourage participation from all over the state. You can enter as many categories as you like, but only one category per entry form.



#### Drop-off Submissions (3 categories)

- Biggest sweet potato by weight
- Longest sweet potato
- Most unusual sweet potato

Please fill out the [printable entry form](#), place the sweet potato in a 1-gallon zip top bag with the entry form taped to the bag. Drop the entries off at the Plants for Human Health Institute, 600 Laureate Way, Kannapolis, NC 28081. There will be a box in the lobby to collect entries from September 30 - October 4. The building is open 8 am-5 pm. If you are unable to drop off your entry, email Doug or Amy for a possible alternate location.

#### Online Submissions (6 categories)

- Highest weight per square foot ratio
- Largest number of sweet potatoes per square foot ratio

[Upload](#) a picture(s) that show the weight or number of the sweet potatoes and the square footage as well as the calculations used to determine your ratio

- Best original sweet potato character or mascot

[Upload](#) a drawing or photo of your original character or mascot

- Best original sweet potato poem or story

[Upload](#) your original sweet potato poem or story

- Best original informational video on sweet potatoes

[Upload](#) your video

- Most creative use of a sweet potato

[Upload](#) a video or photo that shows your creative use of a sweet potato (or sweet potatoes)



### Regional School Garden Training

Wednesday, October 9  
8 am - 3:30 pm

Union County Cooperative Extension Office  
3230-D Presson Rd., Monroe, NC 28112

Join PHHI Stem duo Amy Bowman and Doug Vernon for a free, all-day training session to learn how to utilize a school garden to teach, not just plant science, but all subject areas. We'll even tackle classroom management



strategies for outdoor learning environments.

[Registration](#) is required by September 30.

[Click here for the event flyer.](#) Share with your colleagues!



## Congratulations - Cabarrus County Schools



Cabarrus County Schools has received a \$142,000 Farm to School grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service.

Leanne Havelly, PreK-12 curriculum and instruction and professional learning coordinator, wrote the winning grant proposal, Farm – Fork – Future (F3). The district will work with community partners such as Cabarrus Health Alliance, Dole Foods and N.C. State University's Plants for Human Health Institute.

Amy and Doug will be working with Leanne on developing a K-12 gardening curriculum for the district's 10 STEM schools, as well as providing teacher training for delivering that curriculum.

[Check out lots of other school garden and STEM-focused grants.](#)



## Recap: School Garden Summer Institute

Classrooms do not have to be confined by four walls. The 35 educators at the 2-day School Garden Summer Institute, hosted by Plants for Human Health Institute, left inspired and motivated to literally step out of the classroom with their students to engage all their senses, and cover all subjects in the school garden. For a snapshot look at all the hands-on learning that took place, watch this video.

*Special thanks to our PHHI intern, Matthew Correll, from South Rowan High School, for producing this terrific video!*



## In the Garden Now



### Plant

Plan, plan....plant! Dust off last year's plan or develop a brand new plan for the fall garden. It will be time to plant fall crops throughout September. Here are a few guiding tips:  
1. Have a plan – Who is using which bed? What will we plant...seeds or transplants?



### Harvest

If you planted sweet potatoes in May/June, you may be ready to harvest your first garden crop only weeks after school began. It will be very exciting for students to return to school and see something ready or nearly ready to harvest. Make a plan for how



### Maintenance

Try to think of maintenance in proactive terms rather than reactive terms. You will assuredly have pests investigating and invading your crops, so have your "arsenal" ready before they arrive.

Will we try something new? When are we planting? When do we plan to harvest? What will we do with the harvest? *(If you are new to gardening and not sure where to start, we are here to help! Contact us and we will be happy to come out and meet with you to help.)*

2. Clean out, then prep your beds by topping off with soil and adding organic fertilizer.
3. Determine what lessons (state standards) you will want to teach in the garden.
4. Grid beds, preferably with students.
5. Recruit and engage volunteers – parents, master gardeners, other staff, high school groups
6. Check out irrigation system, signage, weather station, etc.
7. Call us for help if you need it or even if you just need a sounding board for your ideas.

you will conduct a tasting, as some students will likely have never tasted a sweet potato. A few tips for harvesting are:

1. Harvest can begin when leaves turn yellow but must occur before the first frost.
2. Be careful not to damage the skin when digging and handling.
3. Do NOT wash potatoes after digging.
4. Store sweet potatoes in a cool, dry area. They will cure as they are stored, improving their flavor.

The links below have helpful information to assist you with your harvest.

[How-to: Growing Sweet Potatoes](#)

[Sweet Potatoes 101](#)

Caterpillar-like insects such as cabbage loopers will show up fast and furious to defoliate your broccoli, kale, and cabbage. Control methods include hand removal or organic products containing “Bt,” *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

Do an inventory and inspection of your tools and make sure they are in a place where they are easily available to all who will use the garden.

For those of you new to gardening, here are a few crops to consider for this fall (September). If the list seems overwhelming, choose just one or two crops to try.

**Sowing seed directly into the garden bed:**

Lettuce  
Radish  
Carrots  
Peas  
Spinach

**Planting transplants into the garden:**

Broccoli  
Cabbage  
Kohlrabi  
Kale  
Lettuce  
Spinach

**Find more School Garden Resources on our website:**

[Lesson Plans](#)

[Professional Development](#)

[Recipes](#)

[Newsletter Archive](#)

**Questions? Contact us!**

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