

FRESH from the Garden

Who are your Garden Partners?

While we have seen successful school gardens managed by one teacher ([Juli Roach](#) comes to mind), we strongly encourage the very early establishment of a Garden Team. We've even identified a few key players: administration, custodial staff, and parent (or grandparent) volunteers. In January we did a training in Jacksonville, NC, coordinated in part by the Onslow County Cooperative Extension folks. The audience was not only teachers, but also Extension agents and Master Gardeners--potential garden partners.

This was a valuable type of training because agents and Master Gardeners may not have an understanding of the pressures teachers are under to meet rigorous state standards, while teachers are often looking for gardening expertise, the specialty of agents and Master Gardeners. One of our goals in this training was to help these potential partners and volunteers understand that while their technical expertise is invaluable, plant science and efficiency of time and supplies may not be the focus of a school garden lesson. Similarly, the teachers should not expect to drop off their students in the garden, leaving a volunteer to effectively manage behavior and hit target learning objectives. There is a great opportunity for a mutually beneficial partnership that will ultimately benefit the students, but there are likely planning and coordination to be handled beforehand to ensure everyone has the same expectations and decide how to achieve the garden goals.

If you would like to schedule a Garden Training, contact Amy or Doug to work out the details.

Upcoming School Garden Training

*Targeting Johnston and
surrounding counties*

Wednesday, April 29
9 am - 3 pm

Cooper Academy
849 Mial St.
Clayton, NC 27520

*Registration
opening soon*



SGSI: We're Bringing Cali to the Carolinas



[Life Lab](#) is the preeminent school garden training organization in the United States, based in Santa Cruz, California. We are excited to be bringing 2 (TWO!) Life Lab trainers to the School Garden Summer Institute this year. We know that summer is a busy time of year, but this is going to be awesome and it will be worth putting this PD on your calendar and protecting those days. Mark 'em down now...it's June 24-25. Registration will open March 1.



Host a Sowing Party

All six Kannapolis City Schools elementary schools recently had a seeding party at the NC State Plants for Human Health Institute (PHHI) greenhouses. Doug asked the KCS garden leaders to submit their spring garden plans in mid-December to earn an invite to the party. Plans included diagrams from Kitchen Garden planner (or another program) and a tally of the number of transplants they would need to grow. Teachers then gathered at the greenhouse on January 7 where PHHI provided flats, soil and seeds for the teachers to use. Seeds were sown and watered by the teachers. Doug and the greenhouse staff will care for the seedlings until late February when teachers will pick them up and their students will plant into their garden beds. Flats will be returned, cleaned and reused in the future.



In late January, school nurse Dallas Picard brought 16 excited students from Charles E Boger Elementary's Art and Garden Club to the greenhouse at Northwest Cabarrus High School to plant seeds for their garden. Jacob Sykes, agriculture teacher at NCHS, hosted the Boger students and trained them in some basic greenhouse skills, such as filling flats, seeding and watering. The high school will grow the transplants and return them to Boger to plant in early March.

Could this happen in your school district, possibly partnering with the high school or middle school agriculture programs to provide the greenhouse space and growing expertise? Contact Doug to discuss how a network like this could work for you!



Seeds of Knowledge

Have you ever wondered what is inside a seed? I bet your students have!

While you are preparing to plant seeds and transplants outside, take a moment to explore seeds. Start with a seed survey. Collect several different types of seeds (citrus and other fruit, lettuce or carrots, acorns, avocados, maple, coconuts, etc.). Allow students to examine the seeds and predict what it will grow into. Once they have made predictions, have them match the seed to the plant it will grow into. Have them consider the following: Are all seeds alike? What are some similarities? What are some differences? Does a larger seed grow a larger plant? How do seeds travel? Do seeds from the same family look alike? What is inside a seed? Now that you have them engaged, it is time to dissect some seeds to see what is really inside. Try this [lesson](#) from Ag in the Classroom.



Here are some great books to read as you explore seeds:

- *Seed School: Growing Up Amazing* by Joan Holub
- *A Seed is Sleepy* by Dianna Hutts Aston
- *Oh Say Can You Seed?* by Bonnie Worth



Plant

It's time! Yes, February is the start of the gardening season in the piedmont and coastal regions of North Carolina. The mountain region is close behind in early March for cool season crops. Having the garden beds planned out with a purpose in mind is key to getting a good start. For any crops you will be direct sowing into the garden, consider doing a math lesson with square foot seeds and have the students make their seed squares indoors on a day that isn't suitable to go outside.

Harvest

Fall plantings may still be yielding spinach, greens, kale or other leafy vegetables. There may even be a few carrots, turnips or other root crops that have been resting below the soil, waiting to be snatched from the cold ground. Plan a tasting with any of these crops remaining in the garden. [Massaged kale salad](#) is a game changer for those who typically "don't care for it." Don't forget to invite those who would love to help you with this such as parents, grandparents, or Master Gardeners.

Maintenance

Bed prep how-to guide

1. Loosen the soil that has overwintered. Use a tiller, shovel or 20 students with hand trowels digging and turning. Remember, "inefficiency by design" is often the best route to involve all students.
2. If needed, add new soil and level it. Aim for 6-8 inches of soil depth.
3. Apply an organic fertilizer for vegetables (follow label directions).
4. Grid your bed for square foot gardening.

Find more School Garden Resources on our website:

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Questions? Contact us!

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