

The role of a school garden team

Michelle Walk, [Michigan State University Extension](#) - April 01, 2016

If you are thinking about a school garden, think about starting by forming a school garden team.

School gardens are a great way to teach lessons outside the classroom, engage youth in growing food and positively impact the food choices for those involved in the garden.

To help with the planning process for your school garden, start by forming a garden team. Your team should include teachers and staff interested in using the garden or expected to help with maintenance. This would include school administration, teachers, food service staff and maintenance staff. You should also consider including parents and community volunteers that would have gardening experience or have an interest in supporting the project in other ways. Depending on the grade levels that will be involved this is also a great opportunity to engage youth in the planning process.

Including some of these stakeholders may seem more obvious than others. It might be intuitive to include administration and teachers that will be using the garden for lessons and activities. Most schools utilize gardens as part of the science curriculum but gardens can easily be connected to art, English, math and social studies, so consider reaching out to teachers in all subjects to see if they would be interested in assisting. Including food service staff gives you the opportunity to explore taste testing and introducing new items to the cafeteria. Including maintenance staff is important if you will need their assistance in building or maintaining the garden, or if you will need access to hoses, water or other tools that they oversee.

Including parents and community volunteers can provide additional technical support to teachers that want to use the garden but may not have strong gardening skills. This can also help develop partnerships that can support the garden over the summer months when school is not in session. Other community members you might want to consider

including as part of a resource team are Michigan State University Extension staff members, Conservation District staff, and local garden club members. They all have topics they could teach lessons on, could assist in identifying potential funding opportunities and assist in identifying others than can provide technical assistance for larger projects such as school hoop houses.

Lastly, this is a great opportunity to engage youth in the planning process. Youth can be extremely creative when thinking about designing a project like this and will bring fun to the garden development process and make linkages to other areas adults may not have thought of. Engaging youth in the planning process is also a great way to help youth develop leadership skills.

The [USDA \(United States Department of Agriculture\) Farm to School Planning Toolkit](#) has some great suggestions for others to consider for your planning team.

[Michigan State University Extension](#) supports the development and sustainability of school garden projects throughout the state and expanded learning opportunities for Michigan's youth. Learn more about planning a school garden in the article *[Think spring! Plan now for a school garden project.](#)*

This article was published by **[Michigan State University Extension](#)**. For more information, visit <https://extension.msu.edu>. To have a digest of information delivered straight to your email inbox, visit <https://extension.msu.edu/newsletters>. To contact an expert in your area, visit <https://extension.msu.edu/experts>, or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464).

extension.msu.edu

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential.

Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Quentin Tyler, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned.

The 4-H Name and Emblem have special protections from Congress, protected by code 18 USC 707.

We comply with the Federal Trade Commission [1998 Children's Online Privacy Protection Act \(COPPA\)](https://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/rules/rulemaking-regulatory-reform-proceedings/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule) (<https://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/rules/rulemaking-regulatory-reform-proceedings/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule>).