

# Procedures for School Gardens

## SECTION I - DEFINITIONS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### Introduction

School gardens provide a hands-on learning experience and living classroom for schools. Gardens in the Edmonds School District will provide educational value that enhances student learning and improves instructional outcomes. Gardens will align to the standards that are set forth in the district's Strategic Direction.

### Guiding Principles for School Garden Programs

School gardens are "outdoor classrooms" designed to involve teachers and support their multidisciplinary curriculum. As an "outdoor classroom" school gardens MUST comply with all Federal, State and Local laws including district policy, procedures and collective bargaining agreements.

School gardens are engaging spaces for children and young people to develop both respect and a nurturing relationship with nature and community. They are spaces for "hands-on" education, incorporating the full cycle of learning associated with healthy food.

School garden programs are inclusive and culturally relevant, promoting a respect for all backgrounds and points-of-view, and providing each student involved with an opportunity to participate.

School gardens should model environmental stewardship and sustainability, while emphasizing the importance of seasonality to these concepts.

Community gardens will be evaluated by district administrative staff on a case-by-case basis.

### School Garden-Related Programs

Each school garden program is designed to meet the unique needs of its school community. Depending on the site, the garden team and partners will work with the school community to develop garden programming.

### Application Process

The principal of an interested school should first meet with their assistant superintendent for his/her approval. The Facilities & Operations staff will then work with the principal to coordinate the completion and submission of a District Site Improvement Form A-180. The form must give sufficient detail describing location and year round operation. Each application needs to have an ongoing maintenance plan for all seasons. See checklists below for more planning details.

No work may begin until the A-180 is approved by Maintenance. In some cases, further review will be required before approval. Schools that already have a garden in place must come into compliance with this document's requirements, including a Site Improvement Form A-180 within one year of a School Garden Policy being adopted by the Edmonds School Board of Directors.

*Thank you to the Denver School Garden Coalition for the use of wording and sections from the Coalition's Garden Operating Manual developed for Denver Public Schools and Jefferson County School District.*

## **Definitions**

Garden: A defined area for growing plants or vegetables. Gardens are for school use only.

School: The actual school site with or planning a garden.

District: Edmonds School District #15.

Volunteer: Any individuals working in the garden who are not staff of the school district and who are not receiving compensation. Volunteers must go through a district background check at their expense.

Community Garden Partner: Garden-related entity specializing in school gardens or gardening techniques (master gardeners, Seattle Tilth, Farmer Frog, etc.)

## **Checklists**

### School Site

- Principal approval and submission of District Site Improvement Form (A-180)
- On-site administrator identified as the point of contact
- Discuss potential educational aspects of this program with the Executive Director of Student Learning
- Discuss logistical and maintenance aspects with Maintenance Manager
- Submit application to community garden organization (if applicable)
- Schools may engage community partners such as: master gardeners, garden organizations, non-profit organizations, funding sources, etc.
- Secure resources and funding as needed or applicable
- Develop a startup and operating budget plan, including District facilities and utilities
- Develop year round maintenance plan
- Garden team leader succession plan in place

### Facilities and Construction

- Final approval from Director of Facilities
- Soil Test completed and copy sent to Maintenance Manager for biological, chemical, and physical hazards
- Compliance with Exterior Standards for Irrigation including mandatory curtailment, fencing, planting, ADA access, benches, shade structures and site security
- The maintenance administrative staff will review the documentation and consider the project's approval. Upon approval, Director of Facilities will notify the school Principal

### When the school receives approval notification, they must:

- Notify the Maintenance Manager to verify the intended installation schedule;
- Schedule a pre-construction meeting (site visit) with the building Principal and Maintenance Manager;
- Locate utilities for any underground digging;

- Have an Agreement between community gardening partner and school outlining roles and responsibilities of all parties. A copy of which will be sent to the Maintenance Manager prior to execution;
- Have liability waivers on file prior to the start of construction;
- Have Intent to Apply for Grants (required if applying for grants); and
- Have Gift/Donation Paperwork (if applicable)

## **SECTION II - GARDEN CONSTRUCTION AND FACILITIES**

Edmonds School District facilities represent a significant public investment as well as safe and effective places for education. Any work which constitutes a modification, addition or improvement to school property will require prior approval and oversight from the Maintenance Manager. The approval process may extend to every phase of the project and at the minimum includes initial and final approval(s). Generally, the approval process involves the inspection of documents and work to assure that the project is compliant with district, state and federal requirements. Funding may be required if maintenance technicians provide additional labor and/or materials. Any site-funded work will require an estimate and the necessary funding approved by an on-site administrator and the Maintenance Manager before the work is scheduled.

Maintenance of the garden is NOT a district responsibility and the garden team must take responsibility for maintaining the common areas of the garden such as: tool sheds, trees, flower beds and lawns, pathways and courtyards, trash containment areas, and street fronts and sidewalks.

When a garden is out of compliance with these guidelines, it is in jeopardy of losing its Use Agreement. In the event district staff are needed to return the garden site to its original condition, it will be at the expense of the school building.

### **Garden Site Planning**

#### **1. Project Requirements:**

The on-site administrator will be responsible for submitting the required documentation to the Facilities Director, and overall project management, including volunteers.

If the project is structural or modifies any building systems including landscape, the administrator must provide the Maintenance Manager with a detailed drawing showing the project's location on the school site and the intended area where the work will occur on the site.

#### **2. Planning Considerations**

Sheds: (required for tools if garden access will occur outside of school hours) will require input from the Maintenance Manager and will require a permit.

Utilities: Any plumbing or electrical work will require input from the Maintenance Manager. All work must be performed by district maintenance staff. All costs will be incurred by the project.

#### **3. District Garden Technical Guidelines**

Prior to construction/planting, submit the following:

- Maintenance plan indicating responsible parties, planting dates, fall cleanup responsibilities;
- Edmonds School District Garden Checklist;

- Garden plans must be submitted four (4) months prior to the proposed planting season;
- Documentation will be reviewed by the Maintenance Manager and any recommendation forward to the Director of Facilities.
- School to appoint 'advocate' who will monitor and be responsible for garden condition.
- Provide and place topsoil, supplemented as required. If topsoil is stocked on site, provide appropriate storm water Best Management Practices until material is placed.
- During growing season, maintain plot by removing dead material, weeds, do selective pruning, etc.
- At the end of planting season, remove dead plant material off-site.
- Maintenance Manager will advise sponsor when irrigation will be activated and deactivated.

**Prohibited Items and Materials:**

- The use of pesticides and herbicides including:
  - Railroad ties and other treated salvaged woods;
- Pig, dog and cat manures, and ALL treated and untreated manures;
- Non-Organic fertilizer;
- Tires; and
- Scrap metals and broken bricks unless embedded into concrete.

**Plot Planning**

Plot Boundaries: Interior "boundary fences" around individual plots are discouraged; they are hard to weed and can quickly make the overall garden unsightly. The preferred boundary is a weed-free edge between your plot and the adjacent path or neighbor as described in the garden technical guidelines. Ideally, a preferred material is selected, which if everyone uses will contribute to the overall visual continuity of the garden.

Soils and Manure: Untreated manure has been linked to disease through either ingestion of raw food or through open wounds while tending gardens (bacterial infections). Pig, dog and cat manures, and ALL treated and untreated manures are prohibited.

Vermicomposting and Aquaponics will be considered on the site-by-site basis.

It is recommended that prior to any school planting directly into the soil, do a soil test for nutrients, pH, and phosphorus.

**Suggested Tools and Supplies for a School Garden (as applicable)**

- Classroom set of hand trowels or 3 prong cultivators (25-30)
- 5 long-handle shovels
- 2 hard rakes
- 2 hoes
- 1 soft rake
- Wheelbarrow
- Hand pruners
- Garden gloves- youth and adult sizes
- Hose(s)
- Watering wand(s) with hand shut off valves
- First aid kit
- Supplies for plant signage

- ❑ Supplies for classroom grow labs
- ❑ Shed or toolbox in which to store everything (tools may not be stored inside the school if ever being used outside of school hours)
- ❑ Combination lock for shed

### **Garden Site Maintenance Requirements**

The district (landowner) requires that the garden teams keep their garden sites clean, attractive and orderly at all times – especially during the winter. The garden must have a year-round unified appearance to landowners, city officials, and the general non-gardening public. Turn compost and organic material into the soil and cover it with a layer of mulch. You are responsible for maintaining the area immediately adjacent to your plot including paths, compost bins, trash collection areas, fences and other common spaces.

### **School Breaks - Plot Management**

Each school must have a maintenance plan in place for when school is not in session. You are expected to weed, water, harvest and maintain the garden with no impact to district support personnel.

“Off-Season” Storage: any support equipment or items not related to plant material must be stored or removed when not in use. Examples include but not limited to: seating, wire cages, fencing, pots, and tools. Petroleum products are not to be stored on site.

### **Safety Protocols for School Gardens**

- All people working in the garden MUST complete a Volunteer Release Form. These forms can be obtained from the school.
- All volunteers are required to check in at the front desk and wear a visitor’s badge/tag while in the garden during the school day.
- There will be no running in the garden.
- Children will be encouraged to use their hands or small hand tools as much as possible when gardening.
- Children will be provided with gardening gloves.
- Shoes must be worn at all times.
- All participants will be instructed as to proper handling of tools, including no running and carry tools face downward at their side.
- Children must be supervised when gardening.
- Participants who do not follow safety rules will not engage in gardening.
- Certain natural hazards may exist that are beyond the control of the district such as periodic presence of bees. Parents and teachers should make decisions accordingly if their children have any related allergies.
- During non-school hours, parents will be responsible for any allergy related medication or materials.
- No domestic animals are allowed in the garden area at any time.

### **Food Safety**

- Before harvesting all participants must sanitize hands their before and after working in the garden.
- There will be no use of non-organic fertilizers or pesticides in the vegetable garden.
- There will be no use of raw manure as fertilizer.
- Participants should be healthy to work in the garden.
- All containers used to hold harvested produce must be clean.

- All produce will be washed before being eaten.
- No food may be distributed or sold to any organization or persons outside of the district.

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