

Benefits of School Gardens

Description

School gardens help children learn.

Gardening is the study of life. The simple act of caring for living soil and plants gives children a foundation for understanding the principles of birth, growth, maturity, death, competition, cooperation and many other lessons that transfer to human lives. In a school garden, children experience these lessons ‘hands on’ through a learning method that is rich and inclusive to varied learning abilities. The results teachers see every day are now supported by science: school gardens can help our children learn better, both academically and emotionally. For more information, read School Gardens: Can They Make Our Children Smarter?

Gardening together strengthens ties between school and community.

School gardening programs offer opportunities for community members to get involved, reducing the social isolation of seniors with skills to share and connecting children to older generations. They also help connect schools to local businesses and groups when they request sponsorship or volunteer assistance.

Getting their hands dirty helps connect children with nature.

Children who garden get a close-up look at natural processes and the living organisms that thrive in these environments. By learning to care for a living, breathing ecosystem, children develop an understanding of nature’s importance in their lives and the lives of other beings. This fosters a culture of environmental stewardship.

Gardening strengthens children’s immune systems.

There’s more and more evidence that getting dirty exposes us to a variety of microbes that can fortify our health and balance our immune systems against our overly sterilized world. This is particularly true for children who benefit from reduced allergies and asthma when exposed early in life to dirt and the outdoors. The vitamin D they absorb when gardening doesn’t hurt, either!

Working in a school garden helps children stay active, reducing obesity.

Teachers across the country agree: when children garden, they move their bodies more than when passively listening in a classroom. Jumping, bending, lifting, and stretching all take place during a typical gardening session.

Gardening moderates moods and eases anxiety.

There's some evidence that exposure to the beneficial microbes in soil can help regulate the neurotransmitters affecting our brain's emotional state. A whole practice involving exposing yourself to green spaces to lift the mood has even emerged globally, with convincing results. But gardens are more than just another green space: they're hands-on, outdoor classrooms that teach children self-regulation and mindfulness—both of which have been shown to decrease anxiety and depression.

Children who garden at school develop empathy and practice risk.

Teachers who garden with their students notice increased empathy towards other students and the organisms living in their school patch. That's because tending to a 'bug hotel' or watching birds and earthworms thrive in the garden helps children understand the interdependency of nature. A garden also provides the perfect place for children to learn about boundaries and responsibility by practicing new activities in a safe space. Using a paring knife, trying out a hammer, or balancing on the edge of a raised bed are all ways for children to test their edges and learn new skills in a supportive environment.

Teaching and food gardens improve children's diets.

Academics and journalists agree: children who garden eat more fresh vegetables. This extends beyond what they nibble on during classroom gardening time. Apparently just having a garden at school increases their intake of vegetables at home. And that's good news for parents, teachers, and kids.

Visit https://arlingtonurbanag.org/school-gardens/ for more information on starting a school garden.

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