



GARDEN SAFETY

It is necessary to ensure the safety of students and volunteers who may be working in the school garden. While gardens are wonderful and fun, they are new environments to many students and even some adults! In order to prepare all of our students and volunteers for a successful and rewarding time in the garden, we need to develop rules, relationships, and put certain practices in place.

Establish Garden Rules

Have rules posted in the garden and revisit them before you begin work with students and/or volunteers. You may develop rules on what is appropriate attire in the garden (close-toed shoes), how and when to use garden tools, and when and what can be eaten. You can even consider making this a class activity where you all develop your own class rules for the garden.

Gardens are new environments to many children. Take some time to think about the garden from a child's perspective. When in doubt, start at the very beginning. Model proper use of tools before allowing students to use them. Remind kids to be aware of their surroundings, watch where they step, and to only use tools as they are meant to be used and with permission.

You may want to have your students sign a contract for participating in the garden so that they know exactly what is expected of them. Nourish Interactive has a sample contract that you can use:

<http://www.nourishinteractive.com/nutrition-education-printables/129-kids-garden-fun-safety-rules-printable>

Get to Know Your Maintenance and Grounds Crew

Your Grounds Crew will help you keep your garden area tidy. Keeping things mowed is important in being able to work comfortably and to limit the habitat for undesirable critters. This crew will also be able to keep an eye on things while you're in your classroom.

Involve this crew in the development of your garden and with any changes that may impact their ability to mow, weed-whack, access water lines, and generally do their work. Include Blayne Radford, the District's Grounds Management Supervisor, on any major additions or changes to your garden.

Signs, Signs, Signs

Many people enter a garden and are not sure where to work, who is taking care of what plot, what is growing where, etc. Make it easy for everyone by creating a signage system.

A green/yellow/red system may work for your school garden. Green areas are ready to work in/ready to harvest, while red areas let you know that this part of the garden is not to be bothered.

You'll also want to have signage for your garden to let the entire community know about the work you're doing. You never know who may notice and offer their help.

Proper Storage of Tools and Supplies

Keeping tools and supplies locked away when not in use is a great way to ensure safety. Any chemicals, even natural ones, need to be put out of sight, out of reach, and in a secured place. Tools also need to be stored out of the elements to prevent rust and to keep our students from getting into them without supervision. Proper storage also helps prevent tools and supplies from wandering off.

Health and First Aid

Accidents can happen anywhere, including the garden. Keep a First Aid Kit handy for students and volunteers who may be in your garden after school or while the school nurse is away. You may also want to consider making sunscreen or bug sprays available to students and volunteers.

Make it a practice to have students wash their hands before and after working in the garden, as this helps keep our food safe to eat and our kids healthy!