The Forks & Trowels of Creating Gardens with Youth

Information and Photos by Liz Stanley, Horticulture Program Coordinator, Knox-Lincoln & Waldo Counties
Why Develop a Youth Garden?
A Couple of Reasons

Gardens....
• Increase a child’s interest in the natural world
• Mesh with many learning styles
• Boost academic achievement in science, math, language arts, and other areas depending on how you use the garden
• Improve environmental awareness
• Promote good nutrition & exercise
• Make children aware of where their food comes from
• Foster a positive work ethic
• Increase self esteem and nurturing in boys and girls
• Strengthen team work
• Teach practical life-long skills
• Nurture an aesthetic
• Beautify communities
• Are FUN & Rewarding for kids and adults
What are the Goals for Your Garden?

It’s OK to narrow down your goals and start modestly!
Find a Leader

Who will....

- coordinate volunteers, materials, schedules, activities
- communicate to all
- be the contact for all
- write PR
- locate funding & in-kind donations
- troubleshoot
- inspire volunteers

Who is Your Garden Coordinator?

Is this position paid?
Can this role be shared by volunteers?
Find People for your Garden Steering Committee

Diverse Folks:
• Teachers
• Administrators
• Parents
• Local gardeners
• Farmers
• Garden Club members
• Business people
• Clergy
• Master Gardener Volunteers
• 4-H Volunteers, Members
• Town Officials
• Teen mentors
• Boy & Girl Scouts
Who will Host your Youth Garden Site?

- School
- Public Park
- Land Trust
- YMCA
- After School Program
- Food Cooperative
- Church
- Town Office
- Community Organization
- Extension office
Questions to ask your Prospective Host

- Is the space available long term? (is it for sale?)
- Are there zoning restrictions?
- Is there Insurance for people using the site?

If they’re enthusiastic…..

- Make a formal proposal with a visual plan and goals.
- Collaborate on clear by laws to guide your use of the property.

Don’t forget to……

- Give credit to the property owners in PR and show your appreciation in other ways.
Placement of the Garden

Help kids see with images from:

• Google Earth
• Town Office
• School District
• Architect
• Pilot photo
• Fly over!
Site Considerations

Critical:
• 6-8 Hours of Sun
• Access to water
• Good soil
• Level ground

Important:
• Place for tools
• Critter fencing
• Parking
• Road safety
• Convenience
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Garden Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alphabet Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Animal Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bean Teepee</td>
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<td>Butterfly Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Container Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cut Flower Garden</td>
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<td>Dye Garden</td>
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<td>Edible Flower Garden</td>
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<td>Grow Light Garden</td>
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<td>Halloween Garden</td>
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<td>Herb Garden</td>
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<td>Heritage Garden</td>
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<td>Moon Garden</td>
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<td>Native Plant Garden</td>
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<td>Pizza Garden</td>
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<td>Soup Kitchen Garden</td>
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<td>Pressed Flower Garden</td>
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<td>Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purple Passion Garden</td>
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<td>Garden</td>
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<td>Rain Garden</td>
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<td>Rainbow Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salad Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salsa Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seed Savers Garden</td>
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<td>Spud Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunflower House</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swirl or Maze Garden</td>
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<td>Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tea Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three Sisters Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Windowsill Garden</td>
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Designing Gardens with Kids

- Create a theme
- Research plants
- Visualize with
  - Drawings
  - Models
  - Dioramas
Before you Start

Survey your

- Soil
- Weeds
- Pests
- Other challenges
Kill Sod & Weeds by Solarization

Clear Plastic (no holes)
Moist soil
Smooth surface
Sealed edges
4-12 wks to kill perennial weeds
How will you Manage Pests?

Fencing?  
Repellents?  
Beneficial bugs?  
Hand picking?  
Pesticides?

Can kids learn from crop failure?
Learn from your disasters.
Types of Gardens
Raised Beds are probably easiest

PROS:
• Smaller space to manage
• Easier to reach
• Warms earlier in spring
• Drains well
• More control over soil
• Easy to plan and do succession planting.
• More efficient watering
• Less fertilizer & soil amendments
• Crowds out weeds
• Eliminates compaction
• Root crops thrive

Jon Thurston at Troy Howard Middle School
But......

They’re:
• Expensive to build
• Require tools
• Rot out in 5 years
• Dry out faster
• May become ugly over time.
Square Foot Gardening

A method by author Mel Bartholemew

• Raised beds
• Soilless mix (or Soil & Compost mix)
• Grid planting
• Succession planting
• Intensive planting
• Grow Vertically
• Easy to maintain
• Great for youth gardens
Square Foot Gardening method with vertical trellis
Container Gardens

Use a lighter soil or “soilless mix”

Washing machines, barrels, fish trays, terra cotta pots, garbage cans……..
Traditional Row Crop Gardens

Use more space?...Grow more food?...Weed management?
Indoor Gardens
Season Extension Gardens

Unheated hoop houses and greenhouses offer gardening in shoulder seasons.
• When you do something noteworthy, document it and let others know about it!
• Celebrate your successes!

Students grow salads from seeds at Warren Community School

WARREN — Thanks to community volunteers and the Warren Garden Club, the kindergarten, first grade and second grade students at the Warren Community School didn’t wait for the snow to melt to begin their salad growing projects.

Inside each class the students have planted salad greens under grow lights. They are watering the plants daily and keeping a log of the plants’ progress.

The project will culminate with salad eating parties. “I am always impressed by the response of the students to this project,” said Sasha Kutsy, community learning coordinator for the Warren Community School, in a press release.

The project also connects the students to their community by having a farmer or plant expert come into their classes to help with planting day. This year the students met Bill Pleuecker of Hatchet Cove Farm, Jan McDonald of Barley Joe Greenhouses and Liz Stanley from the Cooperative Extension office.

Liz Stanley from the Cooperative Extension office helps Zachary Cushman and Jaden Abruzese plant salad greens.

See more education news on page B3
Garden Tools & Equipment

Invest in quality tools sized for kids.
*Make clear rules for their use!*

Shovels, forks, rakes
Hoses, nozzles, watering cans
Harvest totes, Buckets
Camera
Journals
Seeds and seeding accessories
Mailbox & notepad for messages
Bench or picnic table with shade for table
Tarps for soil and compost piles, composting area
A place to store your stuff!
Growing Plants for your Garden

Schedule to match your program and harvest time:
• Indoor seed starting under grow lights
  Repotting
  Transplanting
• Planting purchased seedlings and sets
• Direct seeding
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What to Grow based on harvest time</th>
<th>When is your program active?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring &amp; Early Summer:</strong></td>
<td>Do you parallel the school year?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carrots (baby)</td>
<td>Are you a summer program?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greens (arugula, Asian greens, mustards, etc)</td>
<td>Who will take care of the garden off season?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herbs: Cilantro, Chives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leaf and head lettuce</td>
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<td>Peas</td>
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<td>Radish</td>
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<td>Spinach</td>
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<td><strong>Midsummer:</strong></td>
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<td>Beans (bush)</td>
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<td>Beets (and Beet Greens)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bunching Onions (scallions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herbs: Basil, Dill, parsley, etc.</td>
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<td>Kale (thinnings and young leaves)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swiss chard</td>
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<td>Summer squash</td>
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<td><strong>Late Summer &amp; Fall:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Beans (succession bush and pole beans)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beets (and greens)</td>
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<td>Broccoli</td>
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<td>Brussels Sprouts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabbage</td>
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<td>Carrots</td>
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<td>Cauliflower</td>
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<td>Corn</td>
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<td>Eggplant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garlic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lettuce (likes cool weather)</td>
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<td>Melons (use early varieties)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Onions</td>
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<td>Peppers</td>
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<td>Potatoes</td>
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<td>Pumpkins</td>
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<td>Spinach (cool weather)</td>
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<td>Squash (summer and winter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
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<td>Turnips</td>
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Where to Find Growing Information

• Books
• Seed catalogs & packets
• UMaine Extension
• Kids gardening curricula
• Experienced gardeners
• Adult Ed programs
• On line
• Trial and error!

Many catalogs have detailed cultural instructions.
Planting was REALLY FUN.
Now... How do we Maintain the Garden?

Midsummer - When gardens live.....or DIE!

- Partner with summer youth programs (child care centers, YMCA programs, recreation department programs, etc.) who can help care for the garden.
- Create a maintenance schedule for children, parents & volunteers.
- Suppress weeds and grass by weeding when they first appear, mulching and watering plants not the whole garden.
- Water plants at the roots.
- Watch for pests & diseases.
- Keep in communication with others.
Harvest Time!

• Pick on a regular basis to keep plants producing
• Have a place and routine for washing veggies
• Conduct a taste test
• Cook with simple recipes
• Host a harvest lunch
• Send food home with kids
• Display at a county fair
• Donate surplus food
Produce ready for a local soup kitchen
Prepare for Next Year’s Garden

- Save seeds
- Clean up the garden
- Turn the compost pile
- Test & prepare soil
- Use cover crops
- Protect soil
- Build a lasagna garden
- Put tools away
- Review what worked and what didn’t
Thank Supporters & Volunteers!

Celebrate your achievements!