

Benefits of School Food Gardens

Growing food outdoors also contributes to students' health and wellbeing. Students gain an understanding of the interdependence of humans with nature. Recent research on school gardens and growing projects indicates the benefits of such approaches for students, schools and communities:

- Increased academic achievement. Students' learning about science and other subjects is improved if they are engaged in the growing of plants. Inquiry-based experiences enhance critical thinking.
- Increased understanding of garden cycles and sustainable agriculture, and their connection to the land that sustains them. Students learn sustainable growing practices, develop environmental responsibility, and cultivate a preference for the flavor of fresh, natural, locally grown produce.
- Increased student consumption of fruit and vegetables and improved nutrition knowledge. Students want to taste the fruits of their labour.
- Improved psychosocial adjustment and social skills. Students work in teams and learn to interact with adults other than teachers. They develop interpersonal relationships and display improved self-esteem. A school garden can become a "spirit-lifting refuge".
- A greater understanding of meaningful work. Students cooperate on real tasks with tangible (and tasteable!) outcomes and develop a sense of ownership and responsibility.
- Beautification of the school grounds and community. A garden offers an aesthetically pleasing alternative to blacktop pavement and provides a community gathering spot for celebrations, meetings and meditation. There is an increased appreciation for nature.
- Development of skills and physical activity that bring rewards throughout one's life. Gardening is Canada's second most popular physical activity after walking.

Mayer-Smith, J & Peterat L. (2010). *Get Growing! Activities for Food and Garden Learning: A Teacher Resource for Elementary and Middle Schools*. Intergenerational Landed Learning on the Farm for the Environment Project at UBC, pg. 10

<http://m2.edcp.educ.ubc.ca/landedlearning/>