



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

SCHOOL GARDENS WELCOME PACKET

For any school garden questions, please contact:

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Our lesson plans are designed to align with MA curriculum standards. We can provide workshops during and after school. We are always growing our activity list- please reach out if you have other ideas for collaboration!



FALL GARDEN ACTIVITIES

Ideas & Opportunities

Fall Workshops

Workshop ideas include Fall Planting, Seed Saving, Fall Cleanup, Cover Crop & Garlic Planting, or Building a Pollinator Garden. We can provide curriculum and can also come to your classroom to facilitate programming.

YouthGROW Farm Field Trip

We love hosting student groups at the YouthGROW farm, a $\frac{3}{4}$ acre educational site in Worcester. Our staff can lead tours and plan activities for a variety of age groups and group sizes during the months of April, May, and June. We do not have specific transportation funding but can work with you to apply for grants.

Classroom Workshops

Parts of a Plant, Seed Dispersal and Plant Reproduction are some of the workshops we can lead. Contact Eliza to schedule a guest lesson on one of the above topics. If you are at a High School/Middle school and would like to incorporate the garden into a separate lesson geared more towards your students, we would be happy to help put something together.

Harvest Distribution @ Dismissal

We can work with your students or on our own to harvest what is in the garden and do a distribution table for parents at dismissal.

We will provide information about the garden, healthy recipe cards, and information about SNAP/HIP and other food security resources for families.

Mobile Market Visits

Bring the Mobile Market to your school for a mini market student shopping experience. This is a great hands-on way for kids to learn about local food and is tailored for pre-k-5th grade.

We currently only have funding to provide this for students between the ages of 3 and 5. The cost per student to offer this program is \$20 and the minimum number of students served per visit is 25.

BOOK A WORKSHOP

To schedule a site visit or workshop, scan the QR code or visit:



<https://calendly.com/rec-school-gardens>





A YEAR IN THE GARDEN

September

Most gardens are still very productive in September! This is a good time to harvest your summer crops, and to plant cold weather crops like root vegetables (carrots, beets) and quick growing greens (lettuce, cilantro, spinach bok choy) peas, beans, and radishes. This is also a great time to take out dead or diseased plants, and do some seed saving for next year!

REC Workshop Options: Fall Crop Planting, Seed Saving

October

If crops like tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and zucchini are slowing down, now is a great time to pull them. This is also the month for planting native perennials, as they can focus on putting down strong roots without having to spend energy on flowering (this includes fruit trees, shrubs, pollinator plants, etc.) October is when we plant garlic and cover crops. Garlic is one of the only annual crops that actually needs to overwinter, and will be ready in July the year after it is planted. Cover crops grow organic matter, add nutrients, choke out weeds, and make sure the soil doesn't erode during fall and winter rains.

REC Workshop Options: Cover Crop/Garlic Planting, Fall Cleanup, Pollinator Garden Planting

November

You can still harvest your cold sea son crops (root veggies, greens) in November unless it has started to frost. November is a good time of the year to mulch your beds! We like to use leaves and other organic matter as long as it isn't diseased! (Fun fact: non-aggressive ground nesting bees often need places like these to lay their larvae over winter and are some of the earliest pollinators in the spring to emerge! Providing a habitat for them is a great way to teach about pollination with your students)

December/January

This is a great time to start planning for the upcoming growing season! What do you want to grow the following season? This is also a good time to order seeds- is there a special variety you are hoping to grow? Let us know in the winter months and we can make sure to order special varieties for you! If you'd like help thinking of ways to engage your students during this time, we would love to help plan a garden themed lesson.





A YEAR IN THE GARDEN

February-March

Keep an eye out for your seedling and compost order form from the REC! If you didn't start garden planning in December/January, now is a great time to get started!

May

Your REC seedlings will be ready this month! Keep an eye out for an email from us. All your seedlings can go in the ground in May, but a good rule of thumb is to not plant tomatoes until it's consistently in the 70's (lots of gardeners use Memorial Day as a marker). If you started seeds inside with your students, now is the time to start "hardening them off" (we have a guide on this if you need assistance).

REC Workshop Options: Garden Planting Day, YouthGROW Farm Field Trip

April

Spring is here! If you'd like to start seedlings indoors with your students, now is the time to do it! You can also clear out your beds of any mulch and cover crops at this time to plant early spring veggies like peas, radishes, and lettuce. Early spring is the best time for pruning fruit trees, shrubs, and other perennials.

Compost deliveries should be coming during this time so keep an eye out! Now is also a great time to let us know what kind of support your school will need for summer maintenance. Let us know if there are summer school programs we can support to use the garden as a resource and to help with weeding, watering, and harvesting.

REC Workshop Options: Garden Planting Day, YouthGROW Farm Field Trip

June

Water the garden, and watch it grow! Harvest any short season crops you planted. Be in touch with REC staff about summer maintenance and have a great summer!

REC Workshop Options: YouthGROW Farm Field Trip



REC NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

Maintaining Your Membership

We know that maintaining a productive garden requires ongoing resources and energy and that some years are more challenging than others. **It is not a prerequisite for membership to have an active and thriving garden.** If your school garden has not been in active use and is in need of support to revamp it, please reach out to us for a fall meeting and we would be happy to help! There are many models for successful school gardens, including bringing in outside volunteer and community support temporarily or as an ongoing practice. For active gardens, we will focus on how to best continue to support you and discuss your ideas for growth. **Our goal is to make a thriving school garden feel easy and possible for your entire school community so that it can be a resource, not a burden!**

Member Benefits Include

- Free seeds, seedlings, and support with seed starting in the classroom
- Free soil testing and analysis as needed and compost delivery each spring
- Access to tools and technical support from REC staff
- REC staff and volunteer support for garden expansions and repairs
- Access to educational in classroom and garden-based programming
- Access to training opportunities for staff/members of the school community involved in garden care
- Grant writing support and access to resources through network wide School Gardens grant opportunities



What we ask for in return

- Written support from your school principal (we have a form for this, if you don't think you've filled it out, we can send one along)
- Identification of a "Garden Steward" who will maintain communication with REC. (This can be a teacher, PTO member or other school staff)
- Completion of an electronic fall survey (15 minutes)
- Completion of a yearly seedling and compost order (will be made available as an online form in the spring)
- A summer maintenance plan to be figured out in the spring
- Updates about general goings on in the garden (support you need, partnerships you have, how we can help, photo updates)



REC NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

Leaving the Network

If we don't hear from a school for 6 months, and make 3 attempts to contact without a response, then we will temporarily remove your school from our network list. A school can always reach out to rejoin the network but for funding purposes, will no longer be officially listed and will not be included for any overall grant funding to support school gardens in Worcester until membership is reinstated. We understand that staff turnover is challenging, and we have had schools leave the network for several years to return again in full swing when they have more staff support. **There is no penalty for leaving the network, and we are happy to have you back whenever your school and garden team are ready.**

Grant Resources

Our staff are happy to support you with grant applications for your garden projects as well as including your needs in our own grant applications. Please let us know your needs/ideas during fall site visits so that we can plan appropriately to support your grant applications.

Please share successful stories/photos of garden related activities throughout the year as they are incredibly helpful to us in securing additional funding for school gardens and inspiring other schools to replicate your successes!

Check out this list of current grant opportunities from Massachusetts Farm to School!

<https://www.massfarmtoschool.org/announcement/grant-opportunities/>



THANK YOU

for being a part of the REC's School Garden Network! We are excited to work with you to create a vibrant and thriving Worcester gardening community!





ABOUT THE REC

The Regional Environmental Council (REC) is a nonprofit organization that's **bringing people together to create a just food system** in Worcester, MA and beyond. We do this through three core programs:



Urban Garden Resource Network of Worcester (UGROW)

We support a network of over 70 community and school gardens and 600 gardeners across Worcester. Support includes seedling distribution, compost deliveries, garden signage and more.



REC Standing and Mobile Farmers Markets

Meet your farmers at Beaver Brook or University Park, or visit the REC Mobile Market at one of 18 locations across Worcester, Webster and Southbridge. All REC Farmers Markets accept SNAP, WIC, Senior Coupons and Healthy Incentives Program (HIP).



Youth Growing Organics in Worcester (YouthGROW)

YouthGROW employs 32-40 high school teens (age 14-18) year-round who gain leadership and jobs skills as they maintain two urban organic farms.

YOU'RE INVITED!

Join us at the **REC Farm Party**, this year on September 29th from 5-7pm on the REC YouthGROW Farm (42 Lagrange St.) **Enjoy an evening of live music, locally sourced food, farm tours and family friendly activities.** This annual fundraiser supports our food justice programming, including the REC School Gardens Network.

BUY YOUR TICKETS!

