



Why School Gardens?

School gardens enable students and educators to dig into
Maine Department of Education's Content Areas

Career and Education Development

- Engaging in the school garden provides students with a practical backdrop to gain the knowledge, skills, and behaviors which lead to successful career paths. The garden can grow career awareness, help students develop areas for career exploration, and make community connections for hands-on experiences and career exploration.
- **Example:** *High school chemistry students experiment with molecular gastronomy to learn about careers in chemistry and culinary arts. They research growing greens, plant and monitor growth, harvest then use molecular gastronomy to make arugula licorice and enjoy with their balsamic vinegar "caviar."*



English Language Arts / Literacy

- Reinforcing the development of strong language and literacy skills is something the garden provides. The school garden offers a space which encourages both reading (from books with garden settings to seed catalogues) and writing (from creative to technical) and intertwines them into other subjects.
- **Example:** *Garden Poetry Day is celebrated school-wide. Each class spends time in the garden reflecting about the season and writing a garden-inspired poem before putting the beds down for winter.*



Mathematics

- Integrating school gardens into mathematics curriculum takes concepts and applies them to real-world applications which involve logic, reasoning, critical thinking, problem solving, and experiences with quantitative data.
- **Example:** *Students create a seed company. They research plant varieties, measure gardens and evaluate plant spacing, plant seeds and maintain records on growth, harvest and dry the seeds, design and create packaging, weigh out seeds; then market, manage transactions and track sales, produce reports, create budgets, and plan for the next cycle.*



Science & Engineering

- School gardens provide access to living laboratories for expanding on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics lessons. Students become invested in garden projects while deepening their understanding of scientific concepts, and through enjoyment of hands-on experiences, develop aspirations for pursuing STEM careers.
- **Example:** *Students learn about composting. They learn about the scientific process of aerobic and anaerobic composting systems, design a composting system for their garden, consult with community experts about composting, and provide school-wide education about waste reduction.*





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Health & Physical Education

- Physical, mental, emotional, and social health education are all supported by time in the school garden. Learning about the impact foods have on our wellbeing, and how to choose to be healthy are lessons taught in the garden.
- **Example:** Classes discuss "eating the rainbow" and how foods of each color deliver nutrients to our bodies. Students use old seed catalogues to cut out pictures of different colored fruits and vegetables, make a color wheel, and taste test different colored vegetables.



Social Studies

- Civics and government, economics, geography, and history are all content areas that can authentically be reinforced with a school garden setting. The lens of growing food can be utilized to look at cultures around the globe, including those in Maine.
- **Example:** Middle school students learn about Maine's Native Americans and "Three Sisters" crops. They plant corn, beans, and squash, and learn about why they were, and are, planted together by Native tribes. Afterwards, they prepare Succotash, a traditional Native American recipe made with the Three Sisters vegetables.



Visual & Performing Arts

- Connecting visual and performing arts to the garden grows engaged students and allows for connections to other areas of the curriculum, while providing space for student creativity to shine.
- **Example:** A unit about World War II utilizes victory gardens as a way to explore spatial concepts, civic engagement, and propaganda. Students learn about common victory garden plants and design their own gardens to scale. They learn about preserving food and pickle their own vegetables, talking about bacteria and acidity. They watch a compilation of videos about victory garden propaganda, then design their own propaganda posters to encourage school gardens and kids eating vegetables.



World Languages

- With food as a common thread across all cultures, school gardens hold space for language and intercultural learning opportunities.
- **Example:** Classes read the book *Seed Folks* and learn about different ethnic groups, chapter by chapter, in the context of a community garden. Students then learn different names for foods enjoyed by cultures across the globe, research countries and staple foods enjoyed by each, and prepare a recipe together, using garden produce.

