



REGINA SCHOOL GARDENING INVENTORY PROJECT

Survey Summary Report

Information Compiled by the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region Health Promotion Department

Schools in the City of Regina were invited to participate in an online survey to determine which schools are involved in gardening projects, what made these projects a success, and/or what challenges were they presented with, as well as what supports they might want or need in the future to keep them up and running. This is what we found:

Survey Participants: École Massy Elementary School; Lakeview Elementary School; Miller Comprehensive High School; Prairie Sky School; St. Dominic Savio Elementary School and Wilfred Walker School.

Common Gardening Projects

- ✓ Prairie Restoration garden **x 2**
- ✓ Rented Community Garden plot used to grow vegetables **x 2**
- ✓ Indoor vegetable container garden in the classroom **x 3**
- ✓ Vegetable Garden plot on school grounds **x 3**
- ✓ Raised beds on school grounds **x 3**

See them on a map at: <http://foodregina.ca/news-resources/blog/>

Memorable Moments

"My students love eating fresh carrots from the garden. They are nothing like the carrots available in the store and the "dirt" on the carrots only makes them taste better." – Lakeview School

"The support from the community, students and different staff members has been incredible. Master gardeners and hobby gardeners alike are excited about the prospect of helping to turn our current concrete wasteland into a beautiful learning space" – Miller Comprehensive High School

"Every year I begin my gardening program with harvesting our vermi-worms and class compost. Every year the students rush in to help out and this year in particular, my students even considered the worms to be a classroom pet and have taken to naming them! It is pretty cute, especially since worms are usually thought of as being gross!" – St. Dominic Savio

"I liked the way the quieter and shy students would go to the garden when they were at recess. It gave them a safe place to explore and interact." – Wilfred Walker

There are too many positive outcomes to name them all! But here are a few: students are learning about where food comes from; there is multi-generational sharing of knowledge; gardening encourages and demonstrates meaningful physical activity; students learn to work collaboratively toward a common goal; they are developing an awareness of the cyclical nature of the seasons and journey their food has come through to arrive on their plate; they are more willing to



try different foods; culinary horizons are broadened; kids and families are eating healthy, nourishing vegetables and herbs that WE grew; children feel a sense of pride in contributing to the community; gardens always attract attention and curiosity from neighbours, not to mention a variety of bugs and bees” - Prairie Sky School

Why start a school garden?

Top three reasons:

1. Supports curriculum outcomes (5/6)
2. Provides outdoor learning opportunities (5/6), and
3. Interdisciplinary learning opportunities (5/6)

Other responses include getting the kids excited about healthy eating, teaching life skills, healthier school environment, support special learning needs, to connect the school and community, the school wanted a unique educational project which would include the use of composting, organic gardening methods such as manual weeding, lasagna layering, biodynamics and companion planting.

Who uses the school garden?

Top **primary** users of a school garden are:

1. Other community members (2/6)
2. Teachers and School Staff (2/6)
3. Grades 1-2 (2/6)

Other users included parents/guardians, grades 3-12, Kindergarten, big buddies from older grades, high school football team, summer day camps, homeless shelter, soup kitchen and food bank users, senior care home residents and other community members and partnering community organizations.

How is the produce from the garden used?

Top responses:

1. Used as part of a snack or meal program at school (4/6)
2. Used for kids cooking programs (3/6)
3. Sent home with students, staff and volunteers (3/6)

Other uses include being donated, stone soup for families, for art, tea, [sunflowers house] as a shelter/fort, for community kitchens, for fundraisers, or just to look at and learn about (due to no food being grown).

What has contributed to the garden's success?

Top Responses:

1. External funding/grants (4/6),
2. School supported the idea (4/6)
3. Support/interest from the community (3/6)
4. Involving the students in the planning (3/6)



Other responses included having funds available through the school, community partners, experienced gardener mentors, champion parent/volunteer, and steering committee.

Resources, training, support, tools used

One respondent received training from Agriculture in the Classroom program – Little Green Thumbs

Identified Barriers

Top response:

1. growing season/summer maintenance (3/6)
2. Lack of support from the rest of the school (2/6)
3. Lack of interest from students (2/6)

Other responses included lack of funding, lack of volunteer commitment, time commitment, and water source.

Additional Supports Needed

Top Responses:

1. Community partners (3/6)
2. Funding (2/6)
3. Tools/Equipment (2/6)

Other responses included volunteers (including physical labour); a proper garden shed; expertise on which plants to plant, plant maintenance and additional gardening expertise. One school mentioned that they do not need additional supports to sustain their garden.

Positive Observed Outcomes

Top responses:

1. Students being engaged with the outdoors (4/6)
2. Increased interest in subjects being taught (4/6)
3. Improved learning outcomes (3/6)
4. increased understanding of where our food comes from (3/6)
5. Created creative opportunities for teaching a variety of subjects (3/6)

Other responses included: increased community connections, increase interest in healthy eating, helped support our school snack/lunch program, influenced families to plant a garden at home, and brought positive attention to our school.



OVERCOMING COMMON BARRIERS

What to do over the Summer Months?

- **Community partnerships** can help to make school gardens a success. When the school is closed for the summer months, look to the community to help maintain the garden! Other schools have had success partnering with senior care homes, church groups, summer kids camps, high school or post-secondary student volunteers, community association volunteers, sports team volunteers, and community garden members to help out.
- Some schools have also developed a **schedule sign-up list** for parents and students to be responsible for the garden for 1 week of the summer at a time.

Funding

Funding is one of the biggest barriers noted for starting or maintaining a school garden. Some options may include:

- See List of grants available for schools for further support.
- Some community associations also have money set aside for projects in the community; contact your community association chair for more information.
- Put a request in to your school community council or school division. *Sometimes* (but not always!) there might be some money available for projects like these.
- Have a school fundraiser specifically for the project.
- Form community partnerships to share the garden and in turn share resources and costs.

Vandalism

None of the schools who responded to this survey reported vandalism as an issue. It is often a perceived concern, however. If school gardens have student art work or signs decorating them, this can deter people from wanting to vandalise something that is *for the* children. Also if there are good community partnerships to help keep an eye out and for respect and understanding, vandalism doesn't seem to be as common as some might think.

Water Source

Access to water can sometimes be an issue. In the planning process, try to plan the garden location near a water source. If there is no such location, try...

- using rain barrels to collect rain water
- see if you can make an arrangement with a neighbour to trade produce for water

Space

- Be creative with planters and boxes
- Rent a plot at a community garden nearby
- Use an unused space close by in the community



Lack of Experience

- Seek out gardening mentors (community gardeners, seniors, teacher, other community members)
- Contact your local public health or community nutritionist for support

School and Community Engagement

It can be hard to maintain a school garden if there is a lack of support from the rest of the school or school community. Some ways to help engage the school and community can be to:

- Get as many people involved from the beginning as you can!
- Form a planning committee
- Connect to school community goals and visions
- Have an “open” house event celebration to show off your garden and explain what all is grown there, and the ways to and the benefits of getting involved.
- Make an announcement or article in community and/or school newsletter.

If you would like further information about this project or about School Gardening in general, please contact the RQHR health promotion department at phone: 306-766-7370 or email: healthpromotionrqhr@rqhealth.ca

