

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project

School Gardens/Outdoor Classrooms Learning Integration

Most folks think “science” when they think about school gardens and children. But there are so many wonderful ways to integrate the wonder and enthusiasm captured by the garden and the outside environment.

Here are just a few samples of activities in the different subject areas:

Reading/Language Arts

- Write, compile and illustrate a collection of garden poems and stories.
- Keep a garden journal with observations, ideas, feelings, experiments, drawings, etc.
- Study agricultural terms and use them for spelling words
- Put together a class newspaper or newsletter about the garden
- Study and learn to use seed catalogs
- Learn to use field guides to identify plants, birds, insects, etc.
- Design and illustrate a garden calendar
- Write and compile a class gardening book with gardening skills and advice
- Contact and write to a pen pal in another school garden program
- Write a report on a gardening topic and present to the class
- Compile a log of daily weather patterns and put together a garden weather log for a reference tool
- Write articles about the school garden project and submit to local newspapers
- Read the daily newspaper and bring in any articles relating to gardening, food, farming, nutrition, hunger, etc.
- Write to an environmental or agricultural organization for information about their work and how you can help
- Design and print a flyer to advertise your garden program
- Write letters to businesses to ask them for tools/other donations

Math

- Measure and draw up garden site plans
- Design a sun dial
- Keep growth charts of plants, records of size comparisons, and design bar graphs to illustrate your findings
- Tally cricket chirps to estimate temperature
- Keep charts and records of seed germination data
- Measure ingredients for recipes
- Measure and keep charts and graphs of wind speed, rainfall and humidity
- Keep records of the weights of garden harvest
- Chart temperatures in Fahrenheit and centigrade
- Plot a compass course through the garden
- Determine weight and volume of wet and dry soil samples
- Interpret and graph charts of planting requirements, harvest estimates
- Make “seed tapes” using paper towels, glue made from corn starch and seeds – use rulers to measure space between seeds and then plant the whole thing!

Social Studies

- Study your state’s agriculture
- Invite a farmer to the classroom and interview him/her about their lives, training and experiences
- Establish a recycling center at the school for paper, glass and cans
- Contact, report on or volunteer services at a local food bank, gleaning project and food cooperatives

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- Study and report on planting and harvesting rituals and folklore
- Interview seniors about their gardening/farming experiences
- Plan a field trip to a farm or orchard
- Report on the background of specific ethnic foods – where they come from, how they are grown, and how they are used
- Trace the histories of familiar plants – where they originated, who brought them to this country, the impact they have had on our diets and how the original plants have been altered
- Study the contributions of Native American foods to American history and diet
- Research and report on how other cultures use and control insects

Music/Drama

- Put together a garden puppet show illustrating gardening techniques or a story about a garden
- Take a garden-themed piece of children's literature and do reader's theater with it
- Write parodies of well known songs, turning them into gardening songs
- Write a class garden theme song
- Write garden poems and set them to music
- Hold a harvest festival square dance
- Listen to the music of composers inspired by nature

Science/Nutrition/Health

- set up and study a hydroponic garden or terrarium
- experiment with "planting by the moon" to observe its effects on plant germination and growth
- study local geology and put together a display of the soil and rock types found in your area
- raise and then release beneficial insects into the garden
- study an undeveloped section of the school yard and make notes of seasonal changes, inventory the plants, animals and insects that live there
- choose an item of food, research and report on its path from production through processing to consumption
- grow herbs and research their historical and culinary uses
- study local agricultural problems (loss of farmland, development pressures, etc.) and find out what is being done about them
- research what is grown locally today and what used to be grown
- figure out how far your food travels by examining a school lunch meal
- find out if any of the food served in the cafeteria is locally grown and if not, why
- ask a local chef to come in for a cooking class
- start a cooking club

Crafts

- make drawings, sketches and paintings of garden flowers, vegetables or fruits
- design labels for plants and to mark plantings
- design t-shirts for your garden program
- design a logo for your garden
- paint rocks to use as borders
- do leaf "poundings" – gather leaves and pound their color and shapes onto fabric
- mount a seed collection or make a seed mosaic
- design and create a permanent sign for your garden
- make leaf, vegetable and fruit prints
- design and create a scarecrow
- make rubbings using plant leaves and bark

729 Haywood Rd. #3 ❖ Asheville, North Carolina 28806

828-236-1282 office ❖ 828-236-1280 fax

www.asapconnections.org ❖ www.growing-minds.org ❖ www.AppalachianGrown.org

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- use your native clay for modeling sculptures
- paint a garden mural or farm life mural
- make a color wheel with objects from the garden
- put together a photo essay of the garden
- create and use natural dyes made from garden plants
- design and build a garden project: birdhouse, birdbath, birdfeeder, solar oven, garden sculpture, cold frame, weather station, trellis, etc.
- shellac gourds to make decorations or to use for birdhouses