

# School Gardens 101

*A guide to planning and planting your school garden*



## - Planning -

**Types of Gardens - Container gardening**, growing plants in individual containers, is a good solution for gardens with limited space or for plants that don't grow well with others. Use containers with drainage holes to ensure plants don't drown. **Raised beds**, beds constructed out of wood or cinderblocks and filled with soil, are good for areas with poor drainage or a high weed burden. Before filling beds, cover ground with landscape fabric and/or chicken wire if weeds or burrowing pests are an issue. **In-ground** gardening is the most common. The ground will need to be worked up or tilled prior to planting. If weed burden is high, consider mulching or laying landscape fabric before planting. Because it is not elevate, in-ground gardens require less water than containers or raised beds.

**Annual vs. Perennial - Annuals** are plants that germinate, flower, and die in one season. For purposes of gardening, this means new seeds will need to be planted each year. **Perennials** are plants that live more than two years, growing over the spring and summer, dying back in winter, and returning the following spring from their rootstock.

**Cool vs. Warm Season Crops - Cool season crops** tolerate light frost but suffer in heat of summer. They are most productive in spring and fall. **Warm season crops** love heat and will not tolerate any frost. They typically have a longer growing season and thus are often started indoors and transplanted outside when temperatures are 50+.

**“Sow Direct” vs. “Transplant” - “Sow direct” or “direct seed”** means the seed can be planted directly into the ground where it will grow. If seeds are small, typically plant more seeds than needed and thin out weaker plants until you have the appropriate spacing. As a general rule, plant seeds twice as deep as its diameter. **“Start” or “Transplant”** means the seed must grow indoors prior to transferring to the ground. Plant a few seeds per cell and remove weakest seedlings with scissors. Water regularly and grow under grow lamps or in a sunny window. Without disturbing roots, transplant to outdoor garden space when conditions are warmer.

### Additional Resources -

**Old Farmer's Almanac:** <http://www.almanac.com/content/information-about-plants-vegetables-herbs-fruit-guides>

**Organic Gardening:** <http://www.organicgardening.com/learn-and-grow/>

**USA Gardener:** <http://usagardener.com/index.php>

## - Planting -

HERBS	When to plant	Annual vs. Perennial	Planting Instructions	Harvest & Storage	Additional needs
Basil	Start mid-April; transplant late May	Annual	Seed ¼ in. deep; plants 10-12 in. apart	Harvest before frost; freeze sprigs in airtight bags and or dry whole leaves	Pinch flower heads for continued growth; harvest regularly for continued growth
Chives	Sow direct mid-May	Perennial	Seed 2-4 in. deep; 12-18 in. apart	Cut down to base when harvesting; avoid harvesting leaves with flowers; use fresh or freeze leaves in airtight bag	Purple flowers are edible, but will scatter seeds if left to ripen; divide plant every 3-4 years
Cilantro	Sow direct April; July for fall crop	Annual	Seed 6 in. apart	Cut large leaves as needed; freeze individual leaves in airtight bags or hang plant cuttings to dry	Avoid growing in heat of summer as leaves will bolt and taste bitter
Mint	Transplant in spring	Perennial	Plant 2 ft. apart	Cut stem 1 in. from ground before flowering or pick leaves as needed; use fresh or dry whole leaves	Very invasive and will take over garden if not contained - best to plant in containers if possible
Oregano	Plant seeds or transplants in Spring	Perennial	Plant 18 in. apart	Harvest as needed before flowers bloom; can be easily frozen or dried	Pinch or trim plant regularly; thin out plants that are more than 4 years old
Parsley	Start early Feb.; transplant mid-May	Biennial (grown as annual)	Plant 6-10 in. apart	Ready to harvest when leaf stems have 3 segments - cut outer leaves as needed; use fresh or dry	Good companion to corn, tomatoes, and asparagus

PLANT	When to Plant	Seas.	Days to harvest	Planting Instructions	Harvest & Storage	Additional Needs
Beet	Sow direct April for summer crop; July for fall crop	Cool	55-65	Seed ½ in. deep; 3-4 in. apart; 8-12 in. between rows	Harvest when 3-4 in. wide; clip off tops and refrigerate fresh 5-7 days	Mulch and water well
Broccoli	Start early March; transplant mid-May	Cool	60 (from transp.)	Plant 12-24 in. apart; 24 in. between rows	Harvest large heads + 6 in. of stem, leaving lower shoots to continue growth; can blanch and freeze	Mulch for moisture and weed control
Cabbage	Start early March; transplant mid-May	Cool	70 (from transp.)	Plant 12-24 in. apart in rows	Cut head at base when heads are firm and desired size; wrap in plastic and refrigerate up to 2 weeks	Gradually acclimate to outdoor temp. before transplanting out; avoid planting with broccoli, cauliflower, or tomatoes
Carrot	Sow direct early April for summer crop; early July for fall crop	Cool	70-80	Seed 3-4 in. apart; 12 in. between rows	May push out of ground when ready; twist off tops, clean under running water, and dry in airtight containers before refrigerating	Prefer loose, wet soil; mulch to keep soil cool
Corn	Sow direct early June	Warm	68-80	Seed 1 in. deep; 16-24 in. apart; 3 ft. between rows	Harvest when silk is green but turning tan on the ends; remove kernels from cob and freeze	Plant in blocks of 4+ rows for pollination
Cucumber	Sow direct early July for fall crop	Warm	60	Seed 1 in. deep; 12 in. apart; 5 ft. between mounds	Cut fruit off vine when 6 in. long; harvest regularly for continued growth; wrap in plastic and refrigerate up to 10 days	Low growing vine - sow in mounded hills or along trellis
Eggplant	Start mid-March; transplant late May	Warm	60-80 (from transp.)	Plant 24-30 in. between plants; 2 ft. between rows	Harvest when skin is shiny and unwrinkled, leaving stem attached; store up to 2 weeks	Stake plants larger than 2 ft. tall
Garlic	Sow direct in Sept. or Oct.	Cool	N/A	Cloves root down; 2 in. deep; 4 in. apart; 6 in. between rows	Harvest when tops yellow and fall over; cure in dry, airy place 2+ weeks; store in cool, dry place	Mulch over winter; remove flowers as plant grows; save "best" bulbs for fall planting
Leafy Greens	Sow direct April for mid-May crop; July for fall crop	Cool	45-60	Seed ½ in. deep; 4-8 in. apart; 6-8 in. between rows	Cut outside leaves leaving smaller ones to mature; refrigerate in plastic bag up to 10 days	Can sow successive crops for continued harvest, avoiding heat of summer
Melon	Sow direct mid-June	Warm	70-90	Seed 1 in. deep; 18 in. apart; 3 ft. between mounds	Ripe if hollow sound when struck; store uncut for 6 days or cut, wrap in plastic, and refrigerate for 3 days	Prune end buds off vines to focus energy on fruits; bees required for pollination
Onion	Buy onion sets; plant mid-May	Warm	65	Bulbs 1 in. deep; 5 in. apart; 12 in. between rows	Tops fall over when bulbs mature; Pull gently from ground and cure in sun for several weeks before storing	Mulch for moisture and weed control; cut any flowering stalks
Peas	Sow direct April for mid-May crop; August for fall crop	Cool	55-75	Seed 1 in. deep; 2 in. apart	Clip or gently pull filled pods off vines; freeze or refrigerate up to 5 days	Climbing vine - plant along trellis or teepee
Pepper	Start mid-March; transplant late May	Warm	70-80 (from transp.)	Plant 18-24 in. apart; 2 ft. between rows	When desired size, cut with small piece of stem attached; refrigerate up to 10 days or prep and freeze	Gradually acclimate to outdoor temp. before transplanting out
Pole Beans	Sow direct late June for August crop	Warm	45-60	Seed 1 in. deep; 3 in. apart	When good size, pick off vine; refrigerate in airtight container for 4 days or blanch and freeze	Plant along trellis or teepee; can sow successively for continued harvest
Potato	Sow direct mid-May	Warm	90-120	Eye up; 1 ft. apart; 4 in. deep; 2-3 ft. between rows; hill as plant grows	After leaves have died, dig up gently on dry day; remove dirt and store in cool, dry, dark place	If cutting seed potatoes into small pieces, let dry a few days before planting; grow in containers for easier harvesting
Radish	Sow direct April for mid-May crop; August for fall crop	Cool	25-35	Seed ½ in. deep; 1 in. apart; 6 in. between rows	Harvest when roots pull out of ground; remove green tops and clean before refrigerating	Avoiding summer heat, can sow successively for continued harvest; Keep soil moist
Squash: summer	Sow direct early July for fall crop	Warm	40-60	Seed 1 in. deep; 2-3 ft. apart; 2 ft. between rows/hills	Harvest frequently for best flavor; Cut off vine and refrigerate up to 10 days or slice, blanch, and freeze	Low growing vine - can trellis if space is issue; mulch and water diligently
Squash: winter	Sow direct mid-May	Warm	110	Seed 1 in. deep; 2-3 ft. apart; 2 ft. between rows/hills	Before frost, cut 3-4 in. of stem off when fruit is ripe, rind is hard, and sounds hollow; cure in sun for 1 week and store in cool, dry place	Grow in rows or hills - small varieties can be trellised; prune vines to focus energy on fruits; bees are crucial for pollination
Tomato	Start mid-April; transplant late May	Warm	70-100 (from transp.)	Plant deeply; 2 ft. apart; 3 ft. between rows	Harvest when skin yields slightly to touch; maintain star-shaped calyx; store in cool, dark place or core and freeze in containers	Gradually acclimate to outdoor temp. before transplanting out; plant along trellis and tie back regularly; Mulch and water well