

Choosing School Garden Produce

Flowers

- Sunflowers can be planted in a circle to create a sunflower house. They also help attract butterflies and birds to the garden.
- Plant bulbs, such as tulips and daffodils that will come back each year!
- Marigolds help deter rabbits, while also bringing beneficial pollinating insects to the garden.
- Spiderwort and Asters bloom in the spring and fall when students are present.
- Edible flowers such as nasturtiums, calendula, and dandelions add color and fun to salads and other garden treats!

Vegetables

- Select vegetables that will mature in spring and fall, while the students are in session.

Spring suggestions: Lettuce, peas, arugula, spinach (can overwinter in some areas!), radishes, beets, green onions or chives.

Fall suggestions: Tomatoes & peppers (plant in mid to late June for an early fall harvest), winter squash and pumpkins, beets (plant in summer for a fall harvest), carrots, kale, potatoes – to suggest just a few. Summer veggies such as cucumbers and green beans will still have plenty to pick in the early fall if kept picked throughout the summer.

- Choose plants that are easy to eat as snacks such as cherry tomatoes, sugar snap peas, beans, carrots, radishes and kohlrabi.
- Grow the ingredients for making a specific food, such as salsa, pickles, pizza, spring rolls and stone soup!
- Choose plants that are good companions. For example, tomatoes and basil together to increase the flavor of both crops.
- Try an 'oddities bed' to show different examples of common cultivators, such as purple cauliflower or orange tomatoes.
- Sungold cherry tomatoes are repeatedly mentioned as a favorite!
- Grow plants that can be used for creating crafts such as gourds or sunflowers.

Fruits

- Strawberries are a great choice: they mature in the spring and come back every year!
- Raspberries are always a great snack – ever bearing varieties will make fruit

throughout fall.

- Blueberries do well in acidic soils. If you don't have acidic soil, try growing in containers, to carefully monitor the acidification of the soil.
- Melons: watermelons make a great fall crop if you have a large area for them to spread, and can prevent vandalism.
- If you have the resources and the support of your district, we suggest planting fruit trees such as apples and pears.

Herbs

- Basil is a must for making pesto pizzas, as well as adding flavor to dips and sauces!
- Cilantro is great in a variety of snacks including salsa, spring rolls and yogurt dips.
Plant a row in late summer for a fall harvest.
- Dill is necessary for creating great refrigerator pickles.
- Stevia is a super-sweet plant that can be used as a sugar substitute.
- Sorrel has a super-sour taste, and can come back year after year. The kids like to sample it! (Try combining with stevia!)
- Mint is another kid-favorite. We suggest planting in containers sunk into the ground, as mint can spread by rhizome and become very weedy if it is not contained.
- Chives – both regular and garlic chives – are a must-have. They re-grow each year, are great for individual snacking, and are a wonderful substitute for onions in the early spring...or any time! Garlic chives have spicy purple flowers that daring students might like to taste!

Using School Garden Produce

There are so many ways! Here are just a few ideas.

- Eat it right in the garden!
- Use produce in cooking activities. Could be as easy as a simple salad or hand-chopped salsa – no kitchen required!
- Use produce in your cafeteria.
- Use produce for healthy class snacks.
- Set up a “taste testing” during lunch or as part of a class lesson.
- If you have space, use produce to teach about food preservation techniques, such as drying, canning, and freezing.
- Donate to a local food pantry.
- Give produce to teachers, crossing guards, bus drivers, or other community members to thank them for their support. Create a “pay it forward” philosophy.
- Send produce home with families during conferences.
- Host community nights where families can come pick produce.
- Sell produce to local markets or restaurants to help support your garden program.