# WISCONSIN SCHOOL GARDEN INTIATIVE BRIEF:

# KID-FRIENDLY GARDENING TOOLS





Every kid loves a good shovel. And a wheelbarrow, and a digging fork! Using tools is a wonderful way to get students invested in garden tasks, teach responsible behavior, and incorporate physical activity into the school day. This brief provides an overview of tools that are best-suited for students in different age groups, a list of tools specific to planting and harvesting, and a guide for teaching proper tool use and safety.

#### Tools for all ages

#### **Trowels & Miniforks:**

Use for planting, bed-prep, and more. Great for beginners, and getting everyone involved. Black plastic type won't rust if left out in rain.

Wheelbarrows: Six cubic ft poly type are big enough for most jobs, yet light enough for young students. One wheeled models are best for pushing and pouring.

# Watering Can Options:

Dram brand has long spouts for hard-to-reach areas, good balance, and a gentle shower for small plants. Size to fit your students.







#### Tools for early learners and elementary students

#### **Short D-handle shovel:**

Handle shape helps kids manipulate shovel, wide blade base with treads helps kids use their feet. Look for 26" handles for young students, and 46" handle for later elementary grades.

## Short-handle rakes: Garden rakes and leaf rakes.

#### Short 3-tine cultivator:

Excellent for many little hands to help prep beds, fluff mulch, or dig for worms. Store in milk crate or 2-gallon bucket.



#### Radio Flyer Wagon:

Perfect for toting produce, watering cans, woodchips, or buckets of compost. The sturdy metal variety is best for gardens.



# Ode to the Five-Gallon Bucket

Oh 5-gallon bucket, ye best garden tool you carry our compost or turn into a stool. You cost not a penny from the local sub store you used to hold pickles and now so much more. We love you for: Woodchips, and water, and tomatoes aplenty, and drumming a rhythm when at last you are empty. If you are too heavy there's your 2-gallon brother and with plastic-cup scoopers you're a tool like no other!



### Tools for middle and high school students

**Stirrup Hoe:** Scuffles soil surface to eliminate many weeds quickly. Shorthandled hand hoes serve the same function. For large spaces, consider a wheelhoe.

#### **Four-tine Cultivator:**

Excellent for prepping a bed. Three-pronged versions work well for separating bales of hay or straw mulch. Digging Fork: Generaluse tool for bed prep, stubborn weeds, or harvesting crops like carrots or potatoes. Also suitable for upper elementary grades. Broad Fork: A large, sturdy tool that can be an alternative to rotatilling. Stomp into soil with feet and pull back to loosen soil. Keeps soil structure intact.









## **Tools for planting**

**Seed spacers:** Drill your own with wooden lath. Make some 1" and some 2"spacing.

**Transplant spacing:** 100' measuring tape, or rope with knots at correct intervals.

Where to plant vs walk: Use stake and string, or square-foot garden grids.



# **Harvesting Toolkit:**

<u>Hand pruners</u>: Thick stems like kohlrabi & cabbage.

<u>Scissors</u>: Delicate crops like leaf lettuce & herbs.

<u>Digging fork</u>: Underground crops like potatoes, carrots.

<u>Carrying it all</u>: Crates, buckets, bushel baskets, two-wheeled carts



#### Teaching tool use and safety

# **Rules for Tools**

- Give yourself space
- Sharp end down
- Lay face down if not using
- Walk, don't run
- Tool, not toy

Before handing over shovels and rakes, it is important to establish your Rules for Tools. Begin with your tools neatly arranged on the ground, sharp end down. Have students notice how the tools are laid out, so they know how to put them away when finished. Then, do a brief demonstration of proper and improper use—including how to carry tools from place to place— and follow with a short, easy-to-remember list of rules and clear, logical consequences for breaking them. Consequences usually takes the form of losing tool privileges for the day, with the chance to try again during the next garden visit. Make sure to have an alternative task ready for students, such as watering, carrying compost, or harvesting herbs. As with any norms, students will be most invested if they understand the reasoning behind the rule. It can also be a valuable experience for students to work together to help create your Rules for Tools, especially if they will be regular visitors to the garden.

#### Resources

Basic Garden Tools List: Lists tools by basic, adult, and child, with approximate costs. www.csgn.org/csysg
Fiskars: Trowels, mini-rakes, pruners, D-handle shovels. Occasionally donate to youth garden programs. www2.fiskars.com
Johnny's Selected Seeds: Hand-hoes and stirrup hoes. www.johnnyseeds.com/c-218-hand-tools.aspx#
Valley Oak Tools: Broadforks and wheelhoes. http://www.valleyoaktool.com/

Local Farm and Garden Stores: Digging forks, three-and-four tined cultivators, shovels, pruners, and advice!

For more information about the Wisconsin School Garden Initiative,

Visit www.wischoolgardens.org E-mail: wsgi@communitygroundworks.org



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