



Getting Started with F2S Gardens

What is Farm to School?

In Missouri, Farm to School (F2S) is a voluntary program with three core elements: (1) school procurement of fresh foods from local farmers; (2) education in food, agriculture, health, and nutrition; and (3) edible school gardens with hands-on learning activities.

Benefits of School Gardens

Childhood obesity and food insecurity are persistent problems in the state. To help address these challenges, Missouri schools are adding school gardens as part of their F2S program. Here's what research tells us about the positive impact of school gardens:

- At schools with gardens, students eat more fruits and vegetables at school and at home.
- Gardens enable schools to increase offerings of seasonal fruits and vegetables.
- Gardens can help reduce food waste through increased school lunch participation.
- When students begin gardening at a young age, they retain their willingness to eat fruits and vegetables as they grow older.

Essential Hands-on Learning

School gardens provide teachers with a creative opportunity to extend learning beyond the classroom. A variety of free educational materials are readily available that align with MO Learning Standards in health, science, mathematics, and English language arts. Students also gain problem solving, critical thinking, and teamwork skills.

Growing Opportunities for Missouri Schools

According to the 2015 USDA Farm to School Census, 38 school districts operate 116 school gardens across the state. Some schools are serving their own produce for school meals and snacks. Others offer community tasting events and cooking demonstrations with their school garden harvest! Bonus: School gardens can engage parents and volunteers and garner media attention and community support.

5 Steps for Getting Organized

1. Prepare a needs statement to share with teachers, food service staff, administrators, parents, businesses and potential volunteers. Explain the nutritional and educational benefits of a school garden. Use facts from the USDA Farm to School Census and the National Farm to School site.

Ferguson-Florissant School District. With a \$91,000 Farm to School Grant, this district hired high school students to prepare produce from local farms to serve at 24 schools. The district, located just outside of St. Louis, also offers Farm to School educational programs and six school gardens with the support of a local nonprofit, Gateway Greening.

2. Hold an informational meeting with students, parents, teachers and community members. Consider what tasks are involved and how much help you will need to maintain the garden and conduct educational events.
3. Develop a one-year plan that includes a sketch for your garden. Utilize advice from our Gardening Resources section.
4. Seek funding support from banks, businesses, and civic groups. Be aware that crowd funding sites take a percentage of your donations. Try submitting a mini grant proposal to a local bank, your school district, USDA or kidgardening.org.
5. Select lesson plans. In our resource section you will find a variety of free educational lessons, handouts, and activities that fit nicely with Missouri Learning Standards and the Common Core Standards. Best advice: Work closely with classroom teachers to complement what they are teaching.

Gardening Resources

Garden to Plate: Food Safety for School and Community Gardens, from Kansas State/University of Missouri Extension. <https://extension2.missouri.edu/n1314>

Getting Started Toolkit, from Georgia Farm to School. <https://gafarmtoschool.org/school-gardens/>

Kids Gardening Toolbox, from KidsGardening.org. <https://kidsgardening.org/>

Plan Your Garden, from Grow Well Missouri.

<http://foodsecurity.missouri.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/01-Garden-Planning.pdf>

Starting and Maintaining a School Garden, from the National Farm to School Network. http://www.farmtoschool.org/Resources/School_Gardens_Fact_Sheet.pdf

School Garden Checklist — archived from the Let's Move (the Obamas' White House program). <https://letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/school-garden-checklist>

School Garden Grants, from the Whole Kids Foundation.

<https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/programs/school-gardens-grant>

Successful Container Gardens, from the University of Illinois Extension.

<https://web.extension.illinois.edu/containergardening/herbveggie.cfm>

Summer in the School Garden, from Golden & Pfeiffer-Hoyt.

<https://www.growing-gardens.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Summer-in-the-School-Garden-A-Resource-for-Working-with-Volunteers-to-Maintain-your-School-Garden.pdf>

The Garden Starter, from Grow Well Missouri.

<http://foodsecurity.missouri.edu/garden-starter/>

PreK-12 Educational Lessons, Handouts and Activities

Eating from the Garden Curriculum (Grades 4 & 5), by University of Missouri Extension.
<http://missourifamilies.org/eatfromgarden/>

Growing with Missouri Harvest of the Season (PreK), from the MO Department of Health and Senior Services. <https://health.mo.gov/living/wellness/nutrition/farmtopreschool/pdf/grow-with-mo-toolkit.pdf>

Kids Gardening Lesson Plans (PreK), from Kids Gardening.org. <https://health.mo.gov/living/wellness/nutrition/farmtopreschool/pdf/grow-with-mo-toolkit.pdf>

Lesson Plans (K-5), from the Southern Boone Learning Garden in Missouri.
<http://www.sblearninggarden.org/lessonplans>

Teacher Center, from the National Agriculture in the Classroom.
<https://www.agclassroom.org/teacher/index.cfm>

Grow It, Try It, Like It! Nutrition Education Kit Featuring MyPlate, from USDA's Food and Nutrition Services. [https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition-garden-resourcesAgriculture in the Classroom's Teacher Center](https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition-garden-resourcesAgriculture%20in%20the%20Classroom%27s%20Teacher%20Center)

Find Answers to your Gardening Questions by contacting your nearby University of Missouri Extension office. Extension staff can help you find information on health and nutrition, food safety, seasonal crops, cold storage, and garden construction. You can also connect with Extension's family nutrition specialists and horticulture specialists or the Master Gardener program. The primary F2S contact is Lorin Fahrmeier fahrmeierl@missouri.edu or 660-259-2230. You can access related Extension publications online.

Sources: National Farm to School Network; USDA Farm to School Census; SlowFoodUSA.org; Washington Post; Cornell University; USDA Food and Nutrition; and Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

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