

Anytime Garden Care

ALL GRADES

A gardener's work is never done! To keep your school garden healthy and inviting there are a few basic chores that always need attention. Follow this garden care activity anytime you want to spend time outdoors and keep students tuned in to the garden.

SUBJECT

EXPLORE/
COMMUNITY BUILDING

TIME

OPEN ENDED

MATERIALS

Trowels

Watering cans

Rakes

Seed envelopes (if
applicable)

Finished compost to
sift (if applicable)

Black nursery trays

Buckets

Wheelbarrow (if
available)

Garden To Do List

DIRECTIONS

- Prior to the activity, refer to the Garden To Do List and survey the garden to predetermine the tasks that you will assign to students, then plan to split the class into groups. When a whole class works in the garden, it is a good practice to split up into smaller groups and rotate through tasks to avoid overcrowding.
- Gather students in the garden and ask them to share their favorite parts of the garden. Then ask if they know who takes care of the garden to make sure they can do all of their favorite things? Explain that caring for a school garden is a huge task and today they will be showing kindness to their fellow students and to the garden's caregivers by spending time keeping the school garden in good shape. Caring for the garden will also give students a sense of ownership and community.
- Divide students into groups and explain the tasks to be accomplished, referring to the instructions in the Garden To Do List. Assign each group to one task (i.e., Group 1 - weed, Group 2 - water, Group 3 - sift compost, etc.). Some of the tasks may need to be modeled for younger students.
- Give students 5-10 minutes at the first task and then rotate so students can participate in all tasks.
- After all tasks are complete (or you run out of time) gather students and ask how they feel after pitching in to maintain the garden? Are there any tasks that they need extra help with (such as trimming fruit trees, too many weeds to clear, etc.). Make a list of extra tasks and provide it to your school's garden coordinator.

SOURCE

- BCK Programs



Garden To Do List

- 1. WEED.** Check for weeds inside and around the outside of garden beds, in the pathways, and around the perimeter of the garden. Use a trowel to pull weeds out from the roots. Collect weeds in one pile, and make sure it's out of the pathway. This will be the debris pile for the garden and will be collected by the grounds crew within a couple weeks.
- 2. WATER.** Fill up a watering can and check for thirsty plants. If there are rain tanks in your garden, use that water for any ornamental plants but not in the garden beds. Signs to look for are plants that are droopy, have yellow or brown leaves, or have leaves that are falling off. Water the soil around each plant for about 5-10 seconds, just enough to saturate the ground around them. If your garden has any potted plants, they will surely need a drink. Water potted plants for 5-10 seconds each, let the water seep in, and water for another 5-10 seconds.
- 3. RAKE UP LEAVES.** Check for areas in the garden where trees have dropped their leaves. Rake the leaves and place them in a pile next to the compost bins. The leaves will be combined with food scraps to make compost. You will be doing the composters a favor by collecting the leaves as they are essential for composting.
- 4. COLLECT SEEDS FROM SPENT PLANTS.** Check the garden beds and perimeter of the garden for plants with spent flowers. Spent flowers are flowers that have finished flowering and are dying off. The dead part of the flower usually contains seeds. Provide seed envelopes from the garden activities supplies. Have students label the seed packet with the name of the plant (if known) and any other information you can find. Place one seed packet of each type in the Seed Library and send home any extra packets. Place the remainder of the dead plants in the debris pile, or make a new pile out of the pathway.
- 5. SIFT COMPOST.** Check the active stack compost pile (this is different from the worm bin, and should have a sign next to it). If the pile looks dark brown, does not have any visible food pieces in it, and no or very few noticeable leaves and twigs, it is ready to sift. Grab a black nursery tray and place a scoop of compost in the tray. Grab a bucket or wheelbarrow and sift the compost over it. Discard any trash pieces in the trash and return the larger objects and any insects (like worms) to the compost pile. Feed the plants with your sifted compost by spreading a handful around each plant in a garden bed. **NOTE:** Please do not sift all the compost to share this activity with other classes.
- 6. HARVEST WORM COMPOST.** Worm castings are the digested dark matter in the worm bin that does not have visible signs of food- the "Black Gold". To separate castings, grab 3 small paper trays for each small group of students (these should be located inside the worm bin). Place a small scoop (1-2 cups) of the digested compost in one tray (this will be from the side of the pile that has no visible signs of food and is a dark brown/black). Bring the trays to the tables and pick out the worms placing them in tray 2 and pick out any trash and placing it in tray 3. Place the worms back in the worm bin, throw away the trash and sprinkle the castings around the base of the plants in the garden beds. Use a watering can to water over the applied castings.
- 7. CLEAR AND ORGANIZE CLUTTER.** Sometimes things get left in the garden and need to be organized from time to time. Collect all buckets and stack them in one spot, do the same with nursery pots, organize the potting supplies and put away tools and gloves.
- 8. PICK UP LITTER AND EMPTY TRASH.** Grab a bucket and take a walk around the garden and pick up any litter you find. Be sure to check the perimeter next to fences, where litter tends to collect. Collect all the litter into one bucket and discard it in the nearest trash can. Return the bucket to the garden.
- 9. EXTRA TASKS:** Make a list of extra tasks that need to be done in the garden, like trimming trees, more weeding, etc. and give the list to your teacher so they can give it to the garden coordinator.

