

Garden To-Do List

SIXTH GRADE

The first time students enter the garden is the best time to set expectations and also take some time to explore. Students will be involved in the rule-making process, then survey the garden to evaluate its condition and identify the tasks that need to be done to make sure it's in tip-top shape. Students will gain a sense of community as they pitch in to care for the school garden.

SUBJECT

EXPLORE

TIME

30 - 45 MIN

MATERIALS

Garden To-Do List, 1 per pair of students

Trowels

Watering cans

Rakes

Seed envelopes (if applicable)

Black nursery trays

Buckets

Wheelbarrow (if available)

DIRECTIONS

- If your school garden does not have an outdoor classroom with a whiteboard, begin the lesson inside the classroom to make the garden rules.
- By sixth grade, many students are already familiar with the school garden and garden rules. Ask students to draw on their past experiences to remind everyone of the garden rules and record them on the whiteboard. Basic garden rules may include: be respectful to others and your surroundings, only pick flowers, plants, or vegetables with permission from an adult, handle plants and animals gently, only touch animals when an adult says it's okay (never touch spiders or bees), use tools safely, and walk at all times.
- Explain to students that they are going to be doing a very important job. They will inspect the garden to identify tasks that need to be done to bring it to tip-top shape, and then they will complete some of those tasks. This is important because maintaining a school garden is a huge effort, and when everyone pitches in, they contribute to making the space enjoyable for each other. It takes a village!
- As you enter the garden, have students make general observations of the condition of the garden. Are there weeds in the garden beds? Weeds in the pathways? Weeds anywhere else? Is there clutter strewn about that needs to be put away and organized? Is there litter and trash that needs to be picked up?
- Gather in the outdoor classroom and have students share their initial observations. Ask students what their ideas are of a well-maintained garden. How would they rate the current state of their school garden? Hand out the checklist and go over it as a class.
- Give students 5 minutes to survey the garden to identify and tasks that need to be done. Return to the outdoor classroom and share their findings.
- Have students choose the tasks they want to work on and send them out for 10-15 minutes to complete the tasks.

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. If the plants produced obvious seeds, like sunflowers, sweet peas, or pea pods, collect the seeds and save them in a seed envelope. Ask your teacher for seed envelopes that are provided with the garden activities supplies. Label the seed packet with the name of the plant (if known) and any other information you can find. Place the remainder of the dead plants in the pile with the weeds, 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.

