



Green Star Award

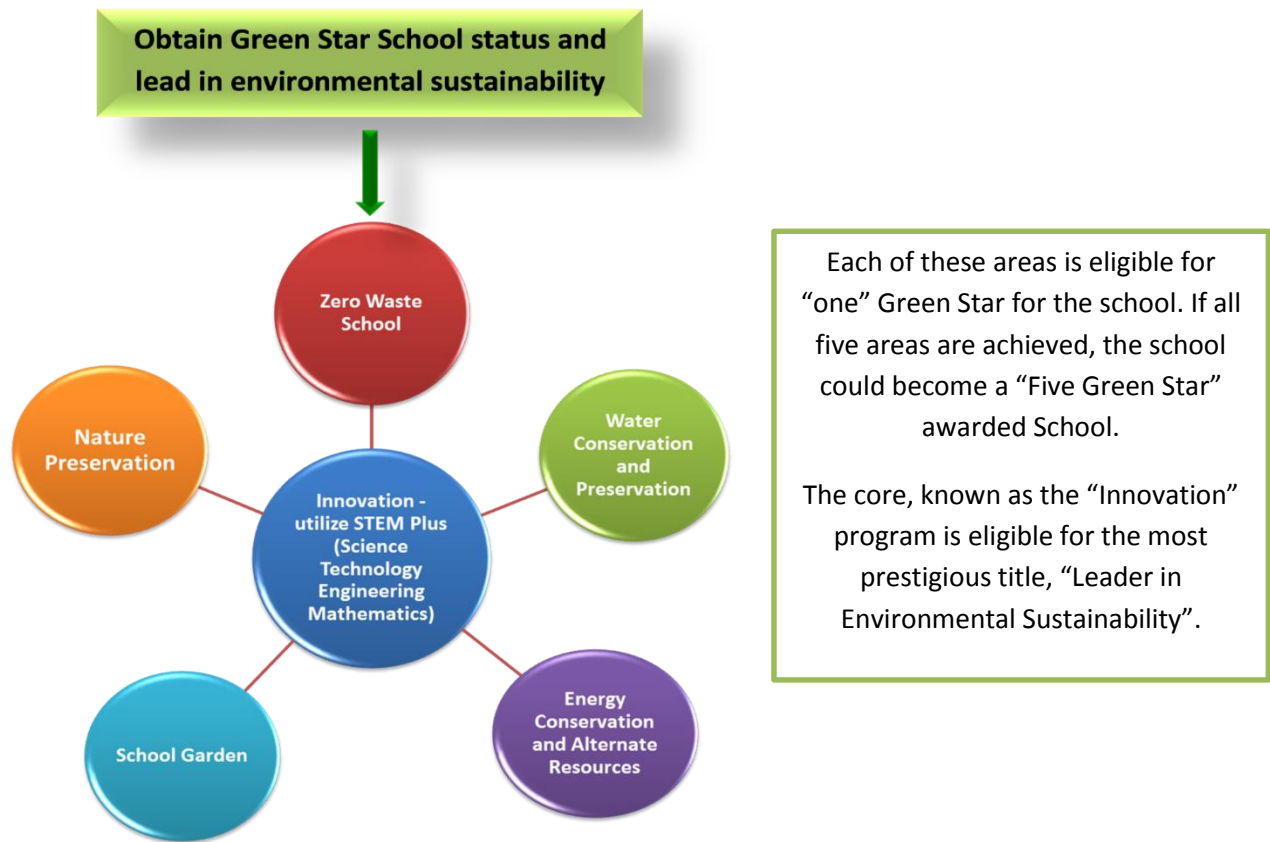
Guidance for Schools

For successful implementation of any program at a school, there must be full support and participation from the Principal and at least one Teacher.

First, form a **“Green Kids Team”** if you do not have one already. This team is expected to lead all “Green” initiatives at school. The kids joining this team need to commit to be leaders and should represent the rest of the school.

Recommendations for the Green Kids Team member selection:

- **Elementary School:** Have two kids selected from each grade starting from Grade 2. Higher grades (5th or some elementary schools 6th grades too) it is best to have representatives from each section. Limit the total number to not exceed 16 students for this leadership Green Kids Team
- **Middle School and High School:** Have about 12 to 16 kids sign up



SCHOOL GARDEN

A School Garden provides both educational and health benefits, and is highly recommended in every school.

The knowledge and experiences gained by children when working and studying a School Garden goes well beyond the school garden, and helps kids to understand nutritional values, food choices, sustainability, and the importance of eating fresh and supporting local farms. Most of all, kids learn to care and appreciate nature. ***Student's observations turn into inspiration and inspiration leads to innovation.***

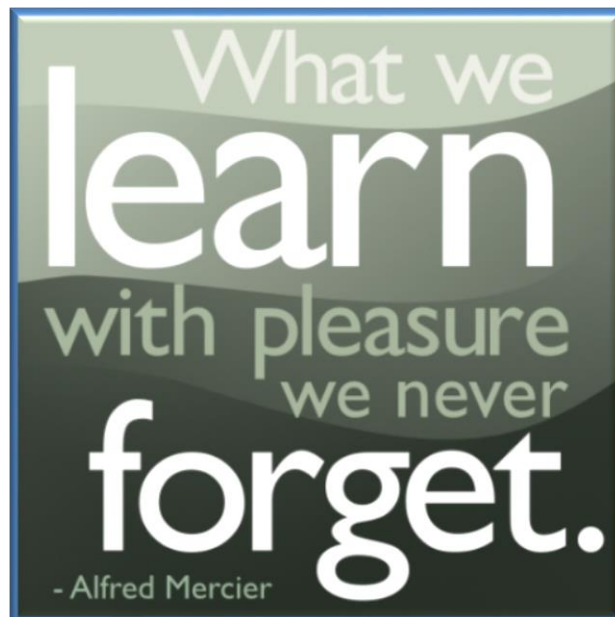
Involving all members of the Green Kids Team and the rest of the school is very important. Not only will students feel bonded to the garden through their help, they will inspire ideas for creating the garden.

Read: The California Department of Education's: School Garden Program Overview

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/gardenoverview.asp>

Join the rest of the schools to implement, and continually maintain and improve your school garden.

California School Garden Network: <http://www.csgn.org/>



Preparation for a School Garden:

Even if your school already has a school garden, you would need to set goals every year and strive to achieve those goals.

1. The most important step is to outline your objectives. Determining the goals and reasons for building the garden is important if the garden is to be successful.
2. Develop a mission statement. This not only helps guide the garden project, but also may serve as a proposal when applying or asking for funds and donations to build the school garden.
3. Obtain appropriate permissions from your school facility management.

(i) Determining Objectives:

In order to determine your objectives, explore goals that are important to your students, and your school and school district. Even if the garden you wish to start will be small, having goals will help you use the garden to its fullest extent.

Involving school and school district goals may help you when asking for a budget and when you're involving parents and the community, as well as when you apply your garden activities to your classroom lessons.

(ii) Developing a vision and mission statement:

You might start with a big **vision** for your school garden. Your vision statement describes the future, and where you would like to take this school garden program in the long run.

A **mission** statement is for the current school year and should represent the intention and status for this present year.

(iii) Obtain permissions:

Contact your school's or school district's facilities department and obtain the forms and process for requesting permissions for a school garden.

It is extremely crucial to involve your facilities personnel before you implement your school garden.

Do not proceed without obtaining the right permissions.

An example scenario is that, you might find an open space in your school and think that it could be used for a school garden; but you may not be aware that there are pipelines and wires under the ground in that location, and the area needs to be clear of plants to enable access to the underground pipes when needed.

Also, the school facilities department might have approved list of plants that could be grown in their property and may not approve any other plants in their facilities.

The school district would also provide recommendations on watering the school garden, and help bring water / irrigation access to the proposed garden area.

There is a great deal to be learned in this step, from determining what plants will grow in your area to correct placement of the garden, and even soil testing.

Upon obtaining all the right permissions, you are then ready to proceed to the next steps.

Planning and Getting Organized:

Once you have determined your objectives, mission, and obtained all necessary permissions for your school garden, the next step is to plan and get organized.

The first step in planning and getting organized is to determine who will help you in building and maintaining your garden. Locating outside sources, such as parents, community gardeners, local gardeners and even local professional horticulturists is important. These outside sources can help you develop your garden, find funding and plant material, and even provide skills and useful information that will enhance your students' gardening experience.

There are many enthusiastic volunteers in your region ready to help your school.

To find a local organization to help you, check the Master Gardeners website:

California Master Gardener County Links: <http://www.mastergardeners.org/>

An example below is the volunteer link from the Master Gardeners website for Alameda County:

School Garden Volunteer Resources in Alameda County, CA:

http://acmg.ucdavis.edu/School_and_Community_Gardening/School_Garden_Volunteer_Resources/

Here is a link that provides more information about school gardens. Also, you could learn more about grant opportunities and this website gives examples of projects you could do that utilizes the garden:

<http://www.kidsgardening.org/node/120>

Once you have identified your resources and who will help you reach your goals, the next step is to get the garden underway.

Reach out to the rest of school students and encourage their involvement. The more you involve your students, the more successful your garden will become!

Enhance the Learning Experience:

Here are some suggestions to further enhance the learning experience:

1. *Farm to School:*

a) Field trip to a local farm

b) Trip to local Farmers Market

c) Invite local farmers to your school – organize a Farmers Market at your school at least once a year to drive the idea and benefits of buying local and fresh produce. Most of the farmers would also agree to give back a portion of their sale on that day back to your school.

2. *School Cafeteria:*

Recommend and influence your school's cafeteria to only buy locally grown fresh produce from local farmers, and use the produce from your own school garden if there is enough quantity.

3. *School Cookbook:*

School cookbook with kids' favorite recipes using sustainable, eco-friendly food selection is a great fundraising idea, and promotes healthy choices and eating habits.

Urban Farming

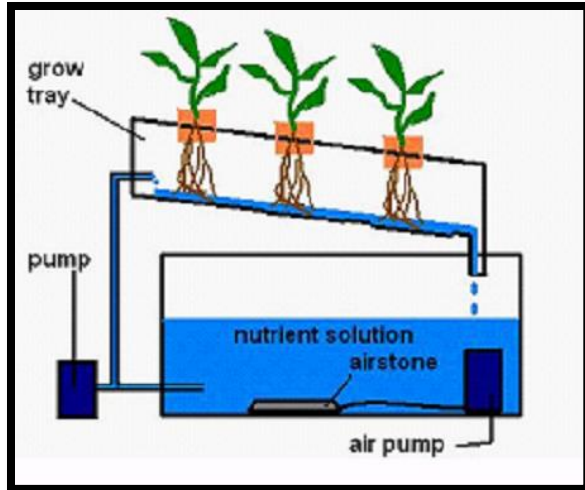
<http://www.beginningfarmers.org/urban-farming/>

The drastic increase in population in urban areas throughout the world has increased the need for healthy, affordable fruits and vegetables. To combat hunger and improve the quality of foods, many are now participating in urban farming initiatives. Urban farming utilizes unused space to grow foods in a local area, which lowers the cost of food by eliminating transport, and gets food to consumers in the freshest state possible.

Here are some ways, how your school could implement some of these urban farming techniques:

Hydroponics

Hydroponics is the process of growing plants without soil. It is a very fun way of gardening and teaches students how plants can be grown anywhere. It is especially useful in teaching urban farming, and to learn more about plants and their living conditions. Hydroponics shows that growing plants can be fascinating, and it isn't just about, digging, and watering.



Many organizations help with hydroponic set up and education. To learn more about one organization that is helping with hydroponics check out:

<http://hydroponicseducation.com/>



Vertical Farming

As we are running out of land spaces in the urban areas, the natural next step is to stack up our gardening vertically.

Building the vertical stands and plant containers itself is another very interesting activity which provides students with designing and engineering skills development opportunities.



Other Helpful resources:

The Edible Schoolyard: <http://edibleschoolyard.org/>

California Nature Plant Society – Santa Clara Valley: <http://www.cnps-scv.org/>

Sustainable Table: <http://www.sustainabletable.org/>

How to Test Garden Soil: <http://www.gardenguides.com/108628-test-garden-soil.html>

How to Apply Fertilizer: <http://www.landscape-and-garden.com/garden-soil/applying-fertilizer.aspx>



Nominate your school for the **Green Star School Award**. Use the check-list to ensure that all requirements are fulfilled. Submit the application form from <http://GreenStarSchool.org>

Application deadline June 30th.

Applications will be reviewed during school summer break, and the school will be notified early September during the beginning of the school year.