

How can gardening lend itself to teaching local food literacy?

Planting seedlings, planning out garden beds, tending to gardens, and harvesting (and eating!) the produce can open up many opportunities to teach about seasonality, what foods grow and are available when, and how to find these locally grown foods at farmers markets and grocery stores.

Case Study: Kids Can Grow Program on Manitoulin Island

- Was initially designed to raise students' awareness of Farmers Markets.
- The program emerged from a need to bring back lost gardening skills and a need to address food insecurity on the Island
- Now involves 8 schools, 1 youth group, a long-term care home, and an Anishinabe elder centre. The program includes community and school gardens, over 30 individual gardens, and community feasts, harvest festivals, and fall fairs.

About the Coming to Market event: Every spring the students bring bedding plants that they've grown to the farmers market. Then they bring produce that they've grown to the market in the fall. The Farmers Market provides free transportation for the students to get to the market and a table for the students to sell their plants and produce. A portion of the sales from the market are contributed to the Kids Can Grow Program.

Impact of the Kids Can Grow program:

- Kids get involved in a healthy lifestyle – more active, better nutrition, happier
- A great market event for kids, vendors and customers
- Increases attendance and sales at local markets and interest in local produce
- Students inspired to be future growers on the island
- Increases awareness of growing, accessing and consuming local produce
- Creates improved nutritional outcomes
- Creates A LOT of goodwill and community spirit
- Incorporates traditional teachings by Anishinabe Elders
- Increases self-awareness, cultural awareness and appreciation, and understanding and tolerance of differences.



Activity Ideas – Growing Local Food Literacy

Using the Foodland Ontario Availability Guide, invite students to think of what _____ (appetizer/dessert/main course) they could create using the vegetables and fruits that they are planting or harvesting.

If they are planting the foods, when will they be able to eat them? How could they share and celebrate these local foods?

<https://www.ontario.ca/foodland/page/availability-guide>

Take students on a tour of the garden to explore what vegetables are ready for harvesting. Discuss what the same vegetables look like in the grocery store, and make note of any differences. Ask the students to think about what supermarket vegetables may have looked like when they were harvested. Connect this to a broader conversation about local food and the food system, if age appropriate. (e.g. Does what is available in the supermarket match local seasonality? Where would you buy the types of foods that you're growing in the garden?)

This activity and many more are available in Ecosource's ReRooted in Play Activity Guide – available at <http://ecosource.ca/about-us/publications/>.

Ideas for Gardening without a Garden:

Start SMALL and build capacity!

- Set-up container gardens on-site (including indoors)
- Create mobile planters
- Plant simple and quick growing plants
- Use non-traditional planting spaces, such as recycling bins, trays, pop bottles
- Grow pea shoots without soil using a baby blanket



Funding Opportunities for School Gardens:

- List of Funding Opportunities shared by Ontario Ecoschools: <http://www.ontarioecoschools.org/tools-resources/funding-opportunities/>
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation: <https://fef.td.com/funding/>
- Whole Kids Foundation: <https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/landing-pages/grants-landing-page>
- Green Apple School Program: <http://www.greenapple.metro.ca/home.en.html>
- Local health units / centres
- Government grants (FedNor, HKCC, OTF)
- Local business association and businesses (for discounts on seeds and materials)
- Service clubs (Lions Club, Horticultural Society)

Spotlight: A Selection of Growing Local Food Literacy Resources



Growing Up Organic – Online Resources

<http://cog.ca/ottawa/growing-up-organic/>

- This website offers a wide range of curriculum-linked gardening lesson plans and activities for students from JK – Gr. 12 that address different aspects of our food system (biodiversity, ecosystems, availability, etc.).



Rerooted in Play Activity Guide

<http://ecosource.ca/about-us/publications/>

- The 10 activity outlines in this guide highlight the many ways in which gardening can create healthier bodies and healthier ecosystems though play in an outdoor setting.
- Activities in this guide include “Wake Up Garden!” (with links to food availability / seasonality), “Roots & Routes” (exploring food miles), and “Harvest Time” (introducing students to where they can buy local food in their area).



Imagine a Garden in Every School Website

<http://agardenineveryschool.ca/>

- Website includes a map of school gardens in Ontario (put yourself on the Map!) and a wide range of school garden resources.



FoodShare's Educator Resources

<http://foodshare.net/program/educator/>

- Website provides a wide range of curriculum-linked lesson plans including activities for the school garden.

This Local Food Literacy tipsheet has been prepared thanks to:



Possibility grows here.