



SCHOOL GARDEN SUMMER MAINTENANCE



Farm to School BC is a program of the

Public Health
Association of BC

SCHOOL GARDEN SUMMER MAINTENANCE TIPS

“What do we do with our school gardens over the summer!?”

Caretakers

A successful summer maintenance program requires many hands, not just one dedicated volunteer or teacher! Who else in your community can help support the garden through the summer months?

Some options include:

- Parents, guardians, grandparents, students
- Teachers and other school staff
- Community organizations - non-profits, neighbourhood associations, community centres, daycares, youth volunteer groups, service programs
- Neighbours and families that live close to the school
- Summer school programming
- Community gardens



Britannia School Summer Watering Program
Photo Credit: Ian Marcuse

Maintenance models:

1. Spreadsheet - have parents/families sign up for a week, with a backup family for each week, with a separate sheet indicating contact information for each family. Families harvest some of the crops in exchange for their time or they are allowed to take over a whole bed to grow their own food.
2. Partner with a local organization that does programming over the summer to have them help tend to the gardens.
3. Have a volunteer gardener coordinate and host weekly or biweekly volunteer work parties with the school community. Use a simple form to track sign-ups (e.g. <https://volunteersignup.org/>) and have the principal or other administrator distribute the survey to the school community.
4. Create an interactive ‘to do’ list on a clipboard at the garden entrance or online (i.e. via a Google Doc). Volunteers can cross off completed items, including the date completed, and add new items to the list.
5. To learn more about one program model in action [click here](#). This Summer Watering Program is run in partnership with Fresh Roots, Grandview Woodland Food Connection, and Farm to School BC.



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How to partner with other groups

When working with organizations outside of the school district, consider any liabilities and physical access (i.e., keys for doors or faucets) issues in advance. Make sure that expectations and division of responsibilities are clear from the beginning to prevent misunderstandings.

In exchange for tending the garden, partners could:

- Harvest all or a portion of the produce available during July and August, then return the garden to you in September.
- Collect the produce during July and August and preserve it (if possible).
- Collect the seeds and share them with partners, preserve some for next year.
- Collaboratively plant, maintain, and harvest the garden throughout the year.
- Have some beds that belong to the school, other beds to the partnering group, and share the summer maintenance of all the beds.

Accessibility

Check with your administration and/or school district's facilities or grounds department to ensure that access to water, tools and the garden space is set up over the summer. Consider applying for a [Farm to School BC grant](#) so you can enjoy your garden year-round!

Water: Talk to your school's principal and facilities to make sure the water stays on. Have an emergency contact number over the summer, for someone to call in case something with the water goes wrong.

Keys: If your garden space is within a locked courtyard, ensure that you arrange for it to be accessed over the summer. Use a code lock instead of a lock with a key, when possible, to avoid duplicating keys.

Storage: Find somewhere secure to store equipment, like a shed to help facilitate access over the summer.



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Garden Layout

Create a map of what is planted in the garden and where essential pieces of equipment are, especially if you have more than one caretaker. This can be stored online, on a handout fixed to a shed, or on a bulletin board at the garden. If there are any plants that are not welcomed to be harvested by everyone, consider including them on the garden map or place a sign in front of it.

Watering

Frequency and duration of watering are important factors for plant health. Generally, during the summer months the garden should be watered twice a week for established plants and daily for newly planted seedlings in the first few weeks. To check if you are giving enough water, dig down into the soil a few minutes after you finish watering to measure how far the water has leached. The water should soak the soil at least 3 to 4" beneath the surface. To support healthy rooting systems, it is better to water heavily twice a week instead of shallow 3 to 4 times a week.