



SCHOOL GARDEN SUMMER MAINTENANCE PROGRAM MODEL



Farm to School BC is a program of the

Summer Watering Program

by Fresh Roots/Grandview Woodland Food Connection/Farm to School BC

The Summer Watering Program, a collaboration between Fresh Roots, Grandview Woodland Food Connection, and Farm to School BC (F2SBC), employs youth to take care of the gardens over the summer months.

Overview of program

The program started in 2018 after a Learning Circle hosted by F2SBC where summer maintenance was identified as a challenge for schools. Fresh Roots, Grandview Woodland Food Connection, and F2SBC came together to create this program to support schools, building on the lessons learned from other programs by Richmond Food Security Society and Society Promoting Environmental Conservation (SPEC) in the region. This program relies on collaboration; scaling up across a cluster of schools allows for more effective resources and administration sharing, enabling the program to be available to schools at a reasonable cost.

Location

Seven to nine schools participate annually across SD39 (Vancouver School Board), mainly in East Vancouver on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. Accessibility to the garden sites in the summer months varies across schools.

Coordination

Each year, the schools indicate key logistic considerations at the start of the season including access to tools, emergency contact, and contact information for the building engineers and grounds crew. Additionally, each school outlines their activities and goals for the summer including what work they want to get done and what they would like to grow in addition to general garden maintenance, such as building a trellis or pruning fruit trees. A memorandum of understanding is signed between the schools and Fresh Roots to outline responsibilities and expectations. The youth employees rotate through each school at least twice weekly, with the priority of ensuring that the gardens are well watered.



Britannia School Summer Watering Program
Photo Credit: Ian Marcuse



SCHOOL GARDEN SUMMER MAINTENANCE PROGRAM MODEL



Farm to School BC is a program of the

Labour

Three youth positions work full-time for the summer. These Garden Stewards are supported by mentors including those who work at Fresh Roots and Grandview Woodland Food Connection and volunteer Master Gardeners. The youth receive experiential training, where they learn by doing and can ask the mentors questions as needed. The youth who participate are fairly self-directed and have basic skills and experience related to gardening. Students generally bike between schools, so this model works well within a cluster of schools in close proximity. These Garden Stewards gain more experience related to food production, such as garden planning, weeding, watering, plant families, crop rotation, composting, mulching, pest control, and harvesting.

Crops and purpose

The program works with the teacher leads at each school to see if there is anything they would like to grow. The schools primarily grow food for fall harvest. However, some of the schools such as Britannia and Grandview Elementary, grow some food for community food security programs over the summer.

Financing

The program is supported through the Canada Summer Jobs program, in-kind support from Fresh Roots, Grandview Woodland Food Connection and Farm to School BC, and a fee that the schools pay. Schools pay \$500, with a larger school paying more, to help cover some of these costs and the cost of materials (i.e., soil, seedlings, seeds, etc.).



Britannia School Summer Gardening Program
Photo Credit: Ian Marcuse

What are people saying?

According to one teacher,

"It felt like Jack and the Beanstalk magic was at work in our garden!"

After harvesting a bounty of potatoes, one youth worker excitedly exclaimed,

"I could see myself becoming a farmer!"



SCHOOL GARDEN SUMMER MAINTENANCE PROGRAM MODEL



Farm to School BC is a program of the

Timeline when applying for student funding:

January/February	Fresh Roots applies for Canada Summer jobs funding (deadline early February but confirm as it may shift).
April	Once funding is confirmed, Fresh Roots publish job postings, and all partners share through social media and outreach channels.
May	All partner organizations interview and hire for summer youth positions.
	Confirm schools to be involved in the program, send out surveys to teachers with key information and goals for the summer, sign MoU.
June	Organize school visits and orientation for the youth workers.
July - August	Youth work full time tending to the gardens for 8 weeks.
	Youth check in weekly with Fresh Roots and Grandview Woodland Food Connection Staff, Master Gardeners.
	Plan optional volunteer work parties to involve community members.
September	Conduct an end-of-season evaluation - youth workers submit a report via email.

Resources for job programs

- [Canada Summer Jobs](#) - deadline early February; fully funds summer positions, average funded position is 8 weeks and 35 hours per week.
- [ECO Canada Co-op Students in environmental jobs](#) - Up to 50% to a maximum of \$5,000 to hire students working in environmental fields.
- [Science and Technology Internship Program – Green Jobs](#) - for jobs that may not require specialized environmental skills but result in an environmental benefit.
- [Canada Green Corps](#) - no deadline to apply but limited funding; provides wage subsidies for sustainability related jobs.
- [Green Collar Careers](#) - connects industry partners to youth for internship opportunities in the environmental sector.
- See the [Society for Ecological Restoration](#) for more funding opportunities.



SCHOOL GARDEN SUMMER MAINTENANCE PROGRAM MODEL



Farm to School BC is a program of the

Summer Watering Program Partners



farmtoschoolbc.ca

freshroots.ca

gwfoodconnection.com

For more information, please contact:

Farm to School BC - Vancouver Region

vancouverregion@farmtoschoolbc.ca