



Key Considerations

While all of the projects highlighted in this resource were developed in their own unique way there are some common best practices that should be considered when creating new land-based learning projects.

1. Build and nurture *relationships* with Indigenous partners

- Relationship building takes time. Take time to listen and build relationships before determining plans and timelines.
- Nations and Knowledge Keepers can be busy. If you are unsure who to reach out to, you could start with your School District's Indigenous Education Department or District Principal.
- Do not continue a project if it does not have support and participation from Indigenous partners.

2. Consider *local* contexts

- Land-based learning projects require thoughtful consideration of the history and context of land and place. Traditional practices and ways of knowing vary across regions, Nations, and individual experiences.
- Take the time to research other individuals or organizations that might be conducting similar work in your region. Determine what the needs and assets are in your community before venturing too deeply into planning.

3. Establish a community

- Foster collaboration and support for your project by bringing together members of the school and broader community. Once relationships are established, co-create goals and opportunities with community members. Broad support allows for the project to continue, even when key players move on or retire.
- Mentorship is another way to help establish a community and aid in knowledge translation between schools and between teachers with varying levels of experience.
- Not everyone may be comfortable in a garden setting. Offer an annual or seasonal garden orientation or host a community event to increase engagement from your school community and let others know that the garden is their space too.

4. Consider general garden and school food project logistics, including communication, budgeting and the sustainability of your garden project

- Establish consistent and mutual lines of communication between project coordinators, teachers, school district staff and community members. This is a collaborative process that paves the way for collective decision making.
- Develop a clear and reasonable budget. Account for funds to support broader school and community involvement. This might include honoraria for Indigenous partners' participation, as well as funding for teacher release time or prep time.

- Leverage initial funding sources to receive matching funds or in-kind support. Consider hiring a dedicated coordinator to apply and manage additional funding and project logistics.
- Ensure that your gardens receive adequate care throughout the school year and include a plan to maintain them over the summer. For more information about garden maintenance, [visit the Farm to School BC website](#).
- Work with the facilities and/or grounds departments at your school district to demonstrate the value of your Indigenous plant gardens and build district support for your project. This might involve requesting the creation of new policies or agreements around Indigenous plant gardens that are different from existing garden or landscaping protocols.

5. Be flexible with your timeframe and project plan

- Anticipate that projects will always take longer than anticipated. Do not hold your project to a strict timeline and respect the time it takes to build relationships, community, and buy-in.
- The process is more important than the product.
- Be responsive to the needs of your community and open to new directions and opportunities. Planning, developing and implementing your project should be an iterative and collaborative process that incorporates feedback from the school and broader community partners.

6. Build educational components into your project

- Create interactive and educational components (e.g. plant signs, lesson plans) within the gardens to build school and community engagement.
- Work with your school district to ensure all educational materials related to your project align with the First People's Principles of Learning.
- Interactive educational components offer an opportunity for language revitalization and to foster cultural competencies and connections. Ensure the Nations are leading this process and are sharing knowledge based on their own protocols and processes. Non-Indigenous people do not own any part of Indigenous language or culture. It is not for settlers to share as the owner and cannot act as owners to this information.



Sample Budget for a Native Plant Garden

A number of factors can impact budget planning, including the goals of the program, the size of your future garden, and existing infrastructure. Below is a generic budget based loosely on a school garden that was part of the Harvest4Knowledge program. This specific garden was built on top of grass with a technique known as [lasagna gardening](#). The garden was approximately 2,100 square feet (30ft X 70ft) with no prior fencing or irrigation infrastructure in place. With the Harvest4Knowledge project, there was a tremendous amount of community support: both financially and in-kind. Although the budget below shows a high cost of plants and compost, the school was able to receive these items by donation. If you need support refining your budget, visit Farm to School BC's budget template [calculator](#).

CATEGORY	ITEM	APPROXIMATE COST
Plants / Seeds	Cost depends on size / age of plants, and if you start them from seeds, which is most cost efficient.	\$500 - 1000
Small Equipment (eg. gloves, shovels, hand tools etc.)	3 shovels	\$80
	25 sets of garden gloves (suitable for a class)	\$125
	Buckets - for harvest and weeds collection	\$25
	3 pruning shears (For adult volunteers primarily - scissors ideal for students)	\$80
	bins for storage of tools, seeds, etc.	\$30
	2 rakes	\$50
Honoraria	For Elders, Knowledge Keepers involvement	\$400
Workshops / Consultations	Hiring a plant specialist to assist in the design, and provide guidance during the first year can be highly beneficial.	\$500
Space modification costs	Fencing	\$500 - 1000
	Border edging (helps slow encroaching grasses)	\$150
Irrigation Equipment	100 ft hose, 1 overheard sprinkler, 1 hand sprayer	\$100
Estimated cost for signage	Wood or professional options, approx. 15-20 signs (1 per plant?)	\$150 - 400
Cardboard Boxes (for lasagna garden)	Recommend furniture store donations (big boxes)	\$0
Leaf Mulch	Look for donations from municipal collection	\$0
Soil / Compost	2 - 5 yards (depending on size of garden)	\$250 - 400
TOTAL		\$2000 - \$4000

Native Plant Resources



Considerations for selecting plants

Native plants will vary across the climates and ecosystems within BC. While native plants tend to be pest resistant and suited to their local climate, requiring less input and maintenance, there are some key factors to consider:

- **Plant needs:** Different plants do better in different soil types and conditions, and will have varying water and shade requirements. Make sure you are familiar with the conditions of your garden, and choose plants accordingly.
- **Avoid poisonous plants:** see the Canadian Biodiversity Information Facility's [List of Poisonous Plants](#).
- **Take time to establish:**
 - Gardens are a long term investment. Many native perennial plants may take months to establish and may not be as fast growing as non-native food crops such as cultivated tomatoes or carrots.
 - At the outset of the project, one participant in the Indigenous Foodscapes project noted that with some of the planted areas, "I felt a need to protect them. The plants are not really robust enough to bring the kids in to work with them...", but after a couple years they became more established, allowing students to explore them.
- **Harvest and bloom time:**
 - If possible, select plants whose harvest and bloom times are spread throughout the year to support year round activity in your garden.

Native plants will vary across biogeoclimatic zones - use the linked resources and talk to your local nurseries and Knowledge Keepers for support in choosing which plants may work best for your local climate and school's ecosystem!

Online and Physical Resources

The Natural Edge's Plant Database: The database allows filtering by region, type of plant, moisture level, soil conditions, and light conditions.

Native Plant Encyclopedia from Canadian Wildlife Federation: Allows one to search by plant type and region, or to search for specific plants and find information related to their fruiting and blooming season, recommended growing conditions, and habitat.

Food Plants of BC's Coastal First Peoples by Nancy Turner: A book detailing edible plants across BC by ethnobotanist Nancy Turner.

First Nations Health Authority Traditional Food Fact Sheet: includes information about the histories of use, names in different First Nations languages, and nutritional information for many traditional foods across BC.

Saanich Native Plants Resources: A wealth of resources for native plants in the Garry Oak Ecosystem on Vancouver Island.

Pacific Northwest Native Plant Knowledge Cards from Strong Nations: Features 65 different native edible and medicinal plants on cards that are useful for classroom instruction for communities in the Pacific Northwest.

Halkomelem Ethnobiology Website: Ethnobiology resources and other identification information for Southwest BC.

Native Pollinator Plant Resource: Information about twelve pollinator friendly plants to add to gardens; includes growing conditions and other benefits of the plants.

Gardening with Native Plants Resource: Includes plants specific to Vancouver Island, with overall tips for gardening with native plants.

Native Plant Nurseries

For a full list of Nurseries, see the list of **Native Plant Nurseries and Seed Suppliers in BC** from the **Native Plant Society of BC**, or the Native Plant Suppliers List in BC from the **Canadian Wildlife Federation**. The following is a non-exhaustive list of nurseries across BC that are either Indigenous-owned, run in partnership with Indigenous organizations, or support Indigenous plant projects.

Coast Salish Native Plant Nursery at Maplewood Flats

Location: Adjacent to the Səlilwətaʔ Nation community on Tsleil-Waututh and Coast Salish lands.

The nursery aims to recognize and emphasize the cultural associations of Coast Salish plants and how they can be used to improve habitat value for local wildlife. The Wild Bird Trust of BC manages Maplewood Flats conservation area and is working with Səlilwətaʔ Nation to manage priorities, and inspire the community with plant knowledge through a robust educational program. For every plant purchased, one plant is planted at the Flats.

<https://wildbirdtrust.org/programs/coast-salish-plant-nursery>

Environmental Youth Alliance (EYA) Native Plant Nursery

Location: Strathcona Community Gardens in Vancouver on unceded (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) territory.

EYA engages youth facing barriers to become environmental stewards. They offer free youth-grown native plants to schools and community organizations in East Vancouver and Indigenous-led organizations across the Lower Mainland. They also sell native plants to the public each spring as a fundraiser for their youth programs. <https://eya.ca>

Nupqu Native Plant Nursery

Location: ʔaqʷam Community Lands on the territory of the Ktunaxa Nation in the Southern Interior/Kootenay Region of BC. The nursery is 100% Aboriginal-owned and offers services such as native plants for purchase, revegetation consulting, custom seed collection, seed cleaning, seed stratification, propagation, and reclamation. The nursery only propagates native seed as this increases survival rates, increases genetic variation and biodiversity, and ultimately leads to increased environmental sustainability.

<https://nupqu.com/native-plants-nursery-home>

PEPÁKEN HÁUTW (Blossoming Place) Native Plant Nursery and Garden

Location: at LÁUWEL, NEW Tribal School (Brentwood Bay, BC) on WSÁNEĆ homelands. PEPÁKEN HÁUTW is a native plant nursery, garden, greenhouse, learning centre and gathering space dedicated to educating WELNEW Tribal School students, adults and other community members about native plants and food growing. This site began as a greenhouse and since 2010 has evolved into a multi-faceted education initiative involving many contributing partners and supporters. Their website has many resources for educators that can be adapted for different local contexts and languages. <http://pepakenhautw.com>

Saanich Native Plants

Location: Coast Salish, WSÁNEĆ territory, in Saanich, Vancouver Island. Saanich Native Plants aims to inspire and empower people to restore and conserve nature by providing native plants, seeds, education, and expertise. They have built their business on the core principle of valuing nature and trying to continually work with integrity and excellence.

<http://saanichnativeplants.com>

Splitrock Environmental

Location: Seton River corridor, where the Sekw'el'was and T'it'et communities of the St'at'imc are the original inhabitants, in Lillooet, BC.

Splitrock Environmental is an award-winning, Aboriginal-owned business that specializes in ecological restoration, ethnobotany and propagation of native plant species to benefit wildlife, provide traditional food values, and are adapted to regional microclimates.

<http://splitrockenvironmental.ca/>

Suwa'lkx School's Native Plant Nursery

Location: in School District 43 (Coquitlam) on the unceded traditional territory of the Kwikwetlem First Nation, which lies within the shared territories of the səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), Katzie, (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Qayqayt, Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Sto'lo Nations.

The program, a partnership between Fresh Roots and SD43, was started as a way to reconnect urban Indigenous youth to nature and their cultural practices. The nursery on school grounds sells native plants grown by students as a fundraiser for their programming.

<https://freshroots.ca/suwalkh>

Twin Sisters Native Plant Nursery

Location: Moberly Lake on the territory of the Saulteau and West Moberly First Nations (near Fort St. John) in the Peace River Regional District.

The nursery is run in partnership between Saulteau First Nations and West Moberly First Nations. The nursery "is dedicated to restoring the earth's ecological balance for the benefit of all creation."

<https://www.twinsistersnursery.com>