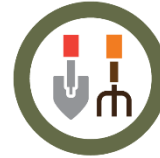




WISCONSIN SCHOOL NUTRITION IN A NUTSHELL

The Lifecycle of Farm to School:



**Building
and Planting**

Benefits to Building and Planting a Garden

Food Service Benefits:

Cost savings, provides access to locally-grown foods, expands variety of menu offerings, can provide better tasting, high quality food, increased participation in school meals, and higher confidence in food safety of foods served.

General Benefits:

Community engagement, promotes life-long healthy eating habits, provides outdoor activity for students, and creates enthusiasm in students about fresh produce.

Items to Consider When Building Your Garden

- Space available
- Lighting/sunlight
- Access to water
- Garden medium (i.e., peat moss, perlite, vermiculite, sand)
- Funds
- Staff/volunteers
- Materials

Gardening Methods

Hydroponic Gardening: Plants are suspended above a tank of water and the roots hang into the water to absorb nutrients. Produce can be grown year-round, and no outdoor space is required.

- **Types of plants:** Lettuce greens, herbs, cherry tomatoes, strawberries, cucumbers, peppers.
- **Growing medium:** No soil! Nutrients are added to water and are carried to the plants' roots through water.
- **Cost:** Growing tower - approximately \$5,000 for initial unit, approximately \$120 every three months for seeds, rockwool, nutrients and pH. If you build your own system, the initial cost may be less, depending on the size.

Raised Bed Gardening: Garden plots above ground level, at least 10 inches high with side supports made from wood, plastic planks, or other materials. Convenient access to all areas of the raised bed, especially helpful for anyone with limited mobility.

- **Types of plants:** Root vegetables (i.e., onions, potatoes), leafy greens, tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage.
- **Growing medium:** Blend of 30% topsoil, 30% compost, 30% sand or peat moss.

- **Cost:** Varies - lumber and labor will be the highest costs.

Container Gardening: Plants are grown in containers instead of planting directly in the ground. Ideal for small spaces and/or limited green space.

- **Types of plants:** In two-gallon containers: snap beans, leaf lettuce. In five-gallon containers: tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, cabbage, and bush-type cucumbers or summer squash.
- **Growing medium:** Recommend using a soilless mix which is a blend of peat moss mixed with perlite and/or vermiculite.
- **Cost:** Cost of soil and any containers that are purchased.

Field Grown (Traditional Garden Bed): Plant directly into the ground with no need to build a structure to support the garden. Existing soil is used which provides an economical option for starting a garden.

- **Types of plants:** Anything! Some plants such as pumpkins or watermelon will take up significant space so, keep this in mind when space planning.
- **Growing medium:** Add 1-3 inches of high-quality compost to prepare your soil. The compost can include a mixture of green material (grass clippings,) with brown material (dried leaves, cardboard).
- **Cost:** Low - may need to purchase some garden tools.

Hoop House, High Tunnel or Greenhouse: Metal or plastic pipes are bent into a series of hoops and are covered with polyethylene plastic. Extends the growing season as crops are protected and less likely to be damaged by the weather conditions.

- **Types of plants:** Heat loving plants- tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, eggplant, lettuce, basil.
- **Growing medium:** Existing soil plus peat, perlite or sand as needed to aerate the soil. Compost at the end of the growing season with leaves or grass clippings to turn under in the spring.
- **Cost:** Low - may need to purchase some garden tools.
- View a Hoop House in action at [Blue Moon Community Farm](#) in Stoughton, WI!
 - [Overview of a Hoop House or High Tunnel Gardening](#)
 - [Planting in a Hoop House](#)

Straw Bale Gardening: Seeds or plants are planted in straw bales that are regularly watered and fertilized. No need for soil, raised height and accessible to gardeners of any age.

- **Types of plants:** Grow pretty much anything! Carrots, onions, potatoes, and corn are more of a challenge. Strawberries love straw bales!
- **Growing medium:** No soil is used, just the straw in the bale. As no soil is used, provide liquid fertilizer once every other week when plants are small, and every week when they are just beginning to grow.
- **Cost:** Inexpensive - cost of straw bale, seeds, and fertilizer.

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