

Plan for Success **Guide**



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Creating a Vision

Analyzing the Site

Analyzing the Site

What is site analysis?

Site analysis is the basic process of getting to know your existing conditions and assessing what will stay, what will go, and what should be modified.

A site analysis involves a series of direct field observations that are drawn onto a base map. A base map serves as a foundation to guide your garden design, and will help you choose the right features and plants for your site conditions, and keep everything in scale.

The following information will help you later when you develop your base map. To learn more about drawing a base map.

How do I get started analyzing my site?

Size

Determine the dimensions of the site and where any buildings are located on the property.

Locate the legal property corners if possible (these are usually staked with a metal pipe driven into the ground until it's almost flush and it often takes a metal detector to find them). Use large tape measures to measure the distance between the corners and the buildings, walkways, large trees, etc. The more detail you can plot in, the better your map will be. See directions for measuring square footage.

Tip: Most properties have a legal document called a "plat of survey," held by the owner, along with the deed or title, which shows the legal property boundaries and the relative relationship of any platted buildings. If you can start with this document, this will be the most accurate way to begin your base map; otherwise, you will need to develop your own basemap by measuring the site.

Getting the Kids Involved

Kids love to measure! If the group can use measuring tapes, have them develop the base map. Let them work in small groups and then compare the various base maps produced to assess accuracy. Discuss the issues of accuracy in measuring. A good tie to the concept of replication in the real-world science experiments!

Tip on drawing to scale: If the group is too young for formal tape measures, have them use their arms, feet, or whatever is handy as units of measurement to "measure" the site.

Tip on measuring: Explore the marking on a ruler and talk about how you can draw a place that is 20' wide on a much smaller piece of paper. If the real object measures 16 arm lengths, can we draw it on paper as 16 finger widths?

Climate and microclimate

Determine your growing zone and climate.

Where you are located in the country dictates your climate, or the overall weather and temperature conditions you have. Climate affects when your first and last freezes occur, and what activities you may be able to do during a given season. For more information on determining your zone and climate, go to Understanding your Climate.

Getting the Kids Involved

Ask your students to take temperature, light, and wind measurements at different locations around your campus; see how the measurements are different or similar. Discuss the weather patterns for your region and how the variations of your schoolyard affect the conditions that plants may face. (For instance, is there a protected courtyard area?) Ask them to create a diagram of the school's microclimate conditions. *Tip: If you are studying weather as part of your curriculum, you may want to have students repeat these measurements throughout the year to create an annual climate log.*

Neighborhood context

Determine how the property relates to the surrounding neighborhood.

Go out and do a walking survey, really look around the neighborhood and see what is going on, even at various times of day.

Ask yourself:

- What's next to the property on each side and what goes on there?
- Are there certain traffic patterns, either from cars or from people walking?
- What do you need to consider about the landscapes of the adjacent properties?
- Are they all very tidy and neat – or are some unkempt and in need of attention?
- Are there businesses or neighbors who will have a view into your garden – or you into their property?
- Are there views you want to screen? Think about the neighbor's perspective: Are there areas that should be screened to give neighbors better privacy or screened for noise?

Draw the features of the adjacent properties on your base map and be sure to note any views to emphasize or screen.

Getting the Kids Involved

Take kids on a neighborhood walk with their journals and let them record their observations; if they are too young to write, have them draw pictures. Discuss the things they saw when you return to class.

Creating a Vision

Analyzing the Site



Light

Determine the light conditions of the space.

Observe the light at various times of day. Typically full sun is > 6 hours per day, shade is < 2-3 hours, and part shade is in between – but the intensity and seasonality factors should be considered as well.

Ask yourself:

- Does the site have full sun, partial sun, or shady conditions?
- Do these light conditions exist based on seasonal or year-round shade due to buildings/evergreens?
- Is there shade in the morning but full sun in the afternoon?
- Is the light filtered through the canopy of a tree overhead?

Tip: Afternoon light and southern or western exposures tend to make the light more intense, so even if shorter in duration, it may still be considered full sun.

Getting the Kids Involved

For older students, it may be possible to have them actually measure the light with light meters used for photography, an example of using the “tools of science”. For younger students, simply focus on how sunny it is in various areas. Watch the shadows move across the schoolyard throughout the day; visit each hour and mark where the building shadows fall.

Tip: Explore how the sun moves from east to west and how the time of day or the angle of the sun affects the intensity of the light. This is a great way to link the study of the earth's rotation in relation to the sun to a practical application; that is, looking at the amount of sun your garden will receive at different times of the year.

Soil

Determine the type of soil.

Get to know your soil by taking a small handful and squeezing the soil between your fingers.

Ask yourself:

- Does it feel gritty? This indicates sand.
- Does it feel smooth like clay? This indicates a high clay content.
- Does it feel somewhere in between gritty and smooth, with a crumbly texture? This indicates a loam soil that contains a balanced mix of the sand, silt, and clay particles.
- Do you see little pieces of leaves and bark? Is there a clean, earthy smell to the soil? This indicates a good amount of organic material, also called “humus.”

Tip: Soil may be different in different areas of your site, so sample it in several spots.

What's in soil, anyway?

Soil is composed of mineral and organic components as well as air spaces. The mineral particles may be sand, silt, or clay, with sand being the largest particle and clay being the smallest. All soils are some combination of these three (3) particles.

The organic component refers to the bits of decomposing plant material in the soil; this is a healthy aspect to the soil as it provides nutrients and improves drainage.

What is compost and when do I need it?

Compost is simply decomposed plant material that we mix into the top 6-8” of soil to improve the texture and nutrient capacity of the soil. The most common problem with soil is that it doesn't have enough organic material in its composition. This is why we add compost. Heavy clay soils may also need to have sand added, but most soils just need extra organic matter. If you have your soil tested, the analysis usually includes a section with recommendations for modifying your soil, which may include the addition of compost.

Getting the Kids Involved

Let them get dirty! Have teams collect soil samples from locations scattered throughout the site (say points 1-10), and then do “feel” tests on each of their labeled samples. How do they describe and rank each sample? Put your sample into a jar and fill it with water; let the jar sit overnight to settle and examine how the layers of particles have distributed in the morning. The different particles will create separate layers. Clay will sink to the bottom, with sand above it, and silt on top. Organic matter will float to the surface and form a layer there. Students can then clearly estimate percent sand, silt, and clay and compare it with the predictions they made when they collected the samples.

For older students, have them test pH and basic nutrient rates for N, P, and K (nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium) back in the classroom (simple kits are available at garden centers and through www.kidsgardening.com).

Tip: Send a representative sample off to your university extension service for actual testing; this usually costs less than \$20.

Drainage

Determine where your water will drain. Surface and internal – the two main types of drainage. Surface drainage has to do with the way water runs across the site. Internal drainage is the way water runs through the soil.

How do I know where the water drains?

The best way to analyze surface drainage is simply to observe the water and where it goes during a rainstorm. There may be soil channels in the ground where erosion has occurred, and you (and your students) will probably have a good idea of where it “puddles” when it rains. Draw the drainage patterns on your base map.

Creating a Vision



Getting the Kids Involved

To measure internal drainage, students can conduct a percolation test. Percolation refers to the rate at which water drains, or “percolates,” through the soil. Dig a small hole, about 1’ x 1’ and fill the hole with water and monitor how quickly the water drains. If the water disappears in less than 30 minutes, the soil is extremely well-drained and probably has a lot of sand in it. If the hole still has water in it after an hour, your site has poor drainage and likely has high clay content. Draw any areas of poor or excessive drainage on your base map.

Let kids go out and look at the site during a rainstorm (under umbrellas, when there is no lightning!); work in partners so one student can hold the umbrella and one can draw the patterns of surface flow. Have them conduct a basic percolation test as described above.

Traffic and use patterns

Determine how people move across the site and make use of the space. Draw these patterns as arrows on your base map; the larger the arrow, the heavier the flow of traffic. If there is a building entrance or exit that gets especially heavy use, make note of it on the base map.

Ask yourself:

- Are there walkways that people use?
- Do people cut across the grass and wear new paths in the turf? (These are all called “desire paths.” It is usually best to accommodate them in your design, as it is difficult to stop people from using these short-cuts.)
- Are there spaces where people gather to play or hang out?

Existing features

Determine the buildings, sidewalks, trees, shrubs, manholes, fences, light poles, utility boxes, playground equipment, and anything else that is a permanent feature on your site.

Measure these items from a known location, like the building or property corner and draw them onto your base map in scale. Label all the features and make notes about the conditions; if a sidewalk is broken and needs repair, state that on your base map.

Assessing Your Needs

Answering these key questions will set the tone for your school’s garden space. Some of the questions you see here are repeated from previous sections.

What is my purpose?

- What are your educational goals and teaching objectives for the garden?
- What do you want to use the garden for in terms of teaching? How will this guide what physical features you need?

What is my style?

- What style works for your school’s culture and the neighborhood context?
- Is it fitting to have a naturalistic landscape with prairie and woodland native plants, or would a more traditional garden be more suitable?
- If you like the look of more formal landscapes, is there a group of people willing to maintain that look?

What kind of maintenance is involved?

How much maintenance will you be able to realistically provide for the garden? Ask the school garden committee what they are willing to do, and think about recruiting interested neighbors (look for the nice gardens in the community!) and parents who may be willing to help as garden volunteers. This is where inclusiveness in the planning process can really pay off!

Example: Naturalistic styles need less maintenance, and formal styles need more. If there is turf grass included, it will require periodic mowing and regular watering and weeding. If there are annual fruits and vegetables, there will be more intensive watering needs during the summer.

Tip: Involve those kids! Kids can be great weeders and waterers, and often welcome the chance to prove themselves as caretakers. Caring for a garden is a great way for kids to practice and develop personal skills such as responsibility, cooperation, leadership, and sensitivity.

What is my budget?

Although you should think big, ultimately, the ol’ budget can be a limiting factor for most school garden projects. As you plan your garden design, start keeping a list of possible materials and their respective quantities so that you can develop a reasonable construction estimate. Visit a landscape supply business and learn the cost of various materials.

Example:

Mulch makes good and relatively inexpensive pathways as opposed to brick or other paving, which can be very expensive and may require professional installation. Simple raised beds made from cedar will be slightly more costly than pressure-treated lumber, but it is usually worth it to know you are not using any questionable chemicals around children or food crops.

Creating a Vision

Holding a Vision Meeting



Holding a Vision Meeting

Once the area has been surveyed and a site has been selected, the school can begin to envision their ideal school garden. The school garden team should hold a vision-creation session to formulate a better idea of what the garden should become. This exercise serves to generate discussion among teachers and students about the character of the garden, its primary uses, and the school's priorities for the space.

The outcome of the Vision Meeting will be a mission statement and concept design for the garden and should be included in your proposal.

Do it democratically!

In addition to team members, invite other faculty, student representatives, a few interested parents, and active community members as appropriate so that everyone who is impacted by the garden has a voice in the planning process. Including a range of perspectives will result in a greater depth of information and will generate good will as well as increased support and participation in the entire school community.

Scheduling

Schedule the Vision Meeting at a time when most participants can attend, ideally setting aside at least 90 minutes for the exercise.

Roles

- Assign one team member to act as a facilitator.
- Another garden team member should take notes and be prepared to transcribe them so that no valuable ideas are lost.
- A third team member should keep track of the group's comments on chart paper, chalkboard, or another large writing surface, so that all can see and react to the input.

Start the session

A facilitator begins the discussion by posing a series of open-ended questions to the group.

- What would you like students to learn in the garden?
- What would you like them to do?
- What topics do you teach that might be enriched by a garden?
- What additional topics could you teach if you had a school garden?
- What student interests might be expressed in this garden?
- What are some potential educational goals for this project?
- What other purposes might this garden serve?
- What existing landscape features present opportunities for an educational garden?
- What are priorities for the garden's design and use?

Tip: Participants should be encouraged to consider a broad range of educational applications of the garden, including its application to math, geography, history, language arts, and fine art, as well as science topics such as biology and ecology.

Tip: As the team considers different possibilities, they can begin to identify teaching goals for their garden. These can be compiled on a separate list, which the school garden team will further refine into a formal garden mission statement as the process moves forward. The resulting list of educational goals will guide curricular activities and teacher training sessions, and ultimately connect classroom lessons with the garden.

Determining Your Goals Worksheet

This worksheet is intended to be a guide for you to summarize your goals for the entire project.

1. Garden as a learning environment

- a. How will the garden support the larger educational goals and values of the school?
- b. What educational activities and lessons will you incorporate into the garden?
- c. What activities are planned or could be planned to enable learners to:
 - i. use the garden for scientific and multi-disciplinary learning?
 - ii. gain confidence and enthusiasm for learning?
 - iii. acquire gardening and environmental stewardship skills?
 - iv. achieve other educational goals through active participation in the garden?
- d. How can the garden meet the learning objectives of a particular lesson or unit?
- e. Do some goals take priority over others? If so, how should this influence the design?
- f. How will you meet the needs of students with disabilities or special learning issues?

2. School garden team

- a. Does the team promote active participation by administrators, teachers, students, parents, neighbors, and volunteers?
- b. Who does the school hope to motivate and train to use the garden: the entire faculty, teachers from a specific grade level, only interested teachers?
- c. Is every team member involved, or does most of the work fall to one or two staff members?

3. Garden maintenance needs

- a. What are the special maintenance needs of the garden and how will they be met?
- b. Do you have a system for assigning garden chores?
- c. Do you have a system for maintaining the garden during the summer when school is not in session?
- d. If vandalism is a potential challenge, how might it be discouraged and minimized?

4. Teacher training

- a. In what areas or topics is training needed? (e.g., garden care and maintenance, curriculum connections, etc.)
- b. Are training workshops scheduled at convenient times and locations for the majority of the participants?
- c. What topics or content would best meet teachers' needs and interests?
- d. Do activities and lessons meeting the local, state, and national standards?
- e. What are your sources of expertise for training?

5. Student involvement

- a. How will the student body be involved with the garden?
- b. What aspects of garden installation and maintenance will the students participate in?
- c. What educational activities will the students conduct in the garden?
- d. Will the students be engaged in active discovery, problem solving, and questioning?
- e. If the garden has already been established, what activities are planned or could be planned for students to:
 - i. use the garden for learning across the curriculum?
 - ii. gain confidence and enthusiasm for learning?
 - iii. acquire gardening and environmental stewardship skills?
 - iv. achieve other educational goals through active participation in the garden?
- f. What smaller scale events and activities make the garden part of the students' daily lives (such as recess time, story hours, etc.)?

6. Extra-curricular activities

- a. For which extra-curricular and community activities will the garden be used?
- b. What events, programs, or celebrations will be planned in the garden?
- c. What ceremonies or cultural events will be held in the garden?

7. Parents, community, and networking

- a. How will the garden team work with existing in-school networks of parents (PTO/PTA/Local School Council)?
- b. Where are opportunities to tap into the support and resources offered by parents and parent groups?
- c. Is there a citywide network of school garden projects and teams that the school might participate in? If so, how will participation help sustain the garden?
- d. How will the school garden be used and supported by the community? What opportunities exist?

Creating a Vision



Forming a School Garden Team

Assembling a motivated, committed school garden team can be the key to building a garden that endures for years. This team should consist of a core group that will be the most active participants in planning as well as others who may play an important but more peripheral role, or who may address some of the diverse constituency of learners who will be using the garden.

We recommend a minimum of six people to form the core of the team.

Six key roles

1: The Facilitator/Principal will:

- Participate in planning, enlist and motivate the school engineer and other key staff
- Approve events and activities of the team (which may include release time for teacher training)
- Enlist support of the community and parent organizations
- Help with fundraising
- Handle other leadership responsibilities with respect to the garden

Tip: The Principal or Vice Principal need not play as active a role in gardening as teachers and other school members, but they should be "on board" to support the idea and key needs.

2: Garden Coordinator will:

- Oversee issues relating to the physical garden (as opposed to the curriculum)
- Work closely with the school principal in establishing the school's core team
- Organize regular meetings with the team
- Take the lead for making plans

Tip: It is helpful if this person has gardening experience. This may be a teacher or parent who is a gardener, and who has time available to dedicate energy to make calls, recruit help, find and order supplies, etc.

3. Planting Day Leader will:

- Work ahead of time to promote pre-planting activities such as getting seeds started in classrooms and training staff for the planting day
- Secure access to a water source and tools, and work out a planting schedule for the school

Tip: Planting Day is a large-scale event and requires one person to take charge of coordinating the day's activities. Experience has shown that delegating this job to another individual eases the burden on the Coordinator and Principal. This is an ideal job for someone who can be involved heavily, but for only a short time, as it is a specific event-oriented responsibility. (If there is to be an annual planting day in subsequent years, then the position can rotate to include a new individual every year.)

4. Resource Leader will:

- Collect, store, and distribute educational resource materials that will help teachers make use of the garden
- Write articles when the school wants to publicize the project in school newsletters, local papers, or other outlets

Tip: Librarians make excellent Resource Leaders. Additionally, enthusiastic parent volunteers could take this role or work closely with this individual to form a subcommittee for School Garden Education Resources.

5. The Parent-Teacher Liaison will:

- Keep the school's PTA, PTO, and/or Local School Council informed of the garden's progress and events
- Recruit parents and members of the community to assist with the garden by volunteering with labor or contributing money or supplies

Tip: This should be a person who is knowledgeable about the garden, and who is also comfortable speaking before groups.

6. Fundraiser/PR Leader will:

- Seek additional funds to sustain the garden.
- Seek sources of funding from local, state, and national agencies
- Work closely with the Principal and assume the lead role in publicizing garden successes in terms of soliciting and securing funds

Tip: Securing funds might begin with seeking donations or in-kind support from neighborhood businesses and organizing a school fundraiser.

Tips for forming a great team

- Most of the team members will probably be teachers from the school, but the team will be stronger and have a better chance of surviving if it also includes people from other areas of the school community.
- The team might include other school staff such as librarians, resource teachers, maintenance staff, administrative staff, and cafeteria staff. Each of these professionals brings a different expertise and perspective to the project.
- The students themselves will have valuable ideas to offer, so having student representatives on the team is an asset.
- Neighbors and other community members might also have time, ideas, and resources to contribute as team members. Parents, especially, should be recruited for involvement. They are already members of the school's neighborhood and community and have a strong vested interest in the success of the school's garden, that is, the enhancement of their child's education! At-home parents can be good sources of help, as they may have flexible schedules that allow them to make phone calls, gather resources, and generate ideas that classroom teachers haven't the time to do.

Building Your Team



Include Specialty Teachers

- Computer/tech teachers can help connect the curriculum to technology and plant research through the Internet.
- Physical education teachers can connect the garden to physical activity, stress relief, stretching, and exercise as well as safe lifting and digging.
- School nurses or dieticians can help create a nutritional emphasis on gardens that include vegetables and herbs.

Include Special Needs Teachers

Gardens are wonderfully flexible learning environments and can be used effectively for learners of diverse abilities. Special needs teachers can help ensure that the garden design will accommodate unique needs such as the use of wheelchairs or walkers. They can also ensure that the design includes a wide range of learning opportunities for everyone.

And remember...

- A school's core team may consist of additional members who share leadership and responsibility for the jobs described above. Other participants may be involved in a supporting rather than leading capacity.
- All team members should attend their own garden team meetings and teacher training sessions, work actively with students during planting days, and take responsibility for overseeing maintenance of the garden during the school year and summer.

Role of a School Garden Team

Once a school garden team is organized, the team members should develop a work plan and outline their expectations. The school garden team members will make decisions about how they will execute the tasks listed below.

1. Set regular meetings.
2. Outline tasks and time commitments; maintain a calendar for the team's activities.
3. Plan the garden design and installation with input from as many school community members as possible. See Create the Garden for details.
4. Continually work to increase participation by each member and to recruit more members.
5. Create an open forum for input and discussion by participants and new members.
6. Create events and programming in the garden (e.g., open houses, graduation parties, and harvest festivals) to invite school families, neighbors, and other members of the community to celebrate the garden and become more involved in efforts to sustain it. See Getting the Community Involved.
7. Establish a plan for on-going maintenance.
8. Develop a rubric for evaluating the success of the project in order to identify strengths and weaknesses that will affect sustainability.

Go Team Go

The School Garden Team assumes the lead

Responsibility for the school garden's continued success and sustainability ultimately rests under the leadership of the school garden team. The school may face some challenges in keeping the garden growing strong on all fronts, but these issues can be overcome.

The team might be challenged by...

- maintaining a school garden team with adequate number of participants when key team members leave the school.
- caring for the garden with student participation throughout the school year.
- keeping the garden growing during the summer season when school is not in session and fewer people are available to work in the garden.
- obtaining resources to sustain and expand the garden and its programs.
- integrating the garden with the curricula so that it supports attainment of local, state, and national learning goals.
- making the time to perform an annual self-assessment so that problems can be identified and addressed and then adjusting the garden program to meet those issues.
- continuing to use the garden for programs and events.
- keeping community interest high, and continuing to solicit active, sustained participation in garden activities.
- networking and keeping contact with other schools that have gardens in order to share ideas and support.

Remember: It is the team members' abilities to take leadership roles and apply what they gain from teacher trainings and their relationship with the collaboration that will affect the long-term outcome of the garden.

Building Your Team

Why Fundraise : Top 10 Fundraising Resources



Why Fundraise

You don't want to avoid fundraising – even if you think you can finance the whole project out of your checking account. Asking participants to give or raise money for a project is a time-honored way of cementing interest and loyalty and of uncovering hidden resources. These resources can be monetary, but they might also involve expertise, talent, and a shared passion for the project.

You may cringe when you hear the phrase “we’re not fundraising – we’re friend-raising,” but it’s true. For an individual, a person becomes emotionally committed to whatever they support with effort or money. For a community, getting gifts from charitable organizations or businesses greatly enhances your chance of having the school garden project noticed and nurtured in the long run.

Top 10 Fundraising Resources

Neighborhood businesses and organizations, especially those owned by parents of your students, can offer much needed materials for your school garden.

Highlighted below are ten suggestions for obtaining inexpensive or free plant materials in your own neighborhood.

Remember that the acquisition of “stuff” (supplies, soil, etc.) or “services” (produce for garden snacks at a garden event, free printing of a flyer or banner, etc.) is often just as good if not better than money.

Tip: Be prepared to provide a receipt showing the value of a donation or in-kind gift, as many will want to take a tax deduction.

Local Hardware Stores

Get to know the local hardware store owner or the manager of the local garden center at Home Depot or similar building supply stores. They often have bags of potting soil, mulch, stone, or vermiculite that are broken and not in condition to sell. They may sell to you at half price! At the end of the season, such stores typically give away seeds and other seasonal materials that they don't want to store or that have a short shelf life.

Local Florists

A local florist can often be a supplier of plant material. They don't have time or space to nurse plants back to health and may gladly contribute them to your classroom “garden hospital.” They will often contribute cut flowers that are not quite fresh enough to sell, but are great for flower studies or flower arranging projects.

Funeral Parlors

A local funeral parlor can also be a source of faded (“past their prime”) flowers. Flowers can be used for flower studies, flower arranging, making potpourri, or pressed flower art works. Plant-based art projects, such as pressed flower book marks, can be made to sell at a fundraising fair.

High School Science Teachers

Borrow materials from your local high school. Most high school science teachers will gladly let you borrow materials from them that they aren't using. Make sure to return things in a timely fashion and in good condition.

Neighborhood Residents

Don't dismiss the goodwill of the neighbors around your school. They have a vested interest in keeping the school in good condition because it affects the value of their property.

School Librarians

Work with the school librarian to identify books for the library that will be useful in the development and maintenance of your garden. Don't forget resources for teachers as well as books for students. This might include curriculum guides and general gardening books.

Interiorscape/Plant Rental Companies

Get to know the manager of the local interiorscape company. In Chicago, one of the largest is Rentokil (a nation-wide chain). When their very large plants are no longer suitable for high price rental, they will give them away. These can make great additions to an indoor atrium for tropical/rainforest curricula integration and are often sizable plants that would normally be quite expensive.

National Association for the Exchange of Industrial Resources

Find out from your school business manager if your school or school district is a member of the National Association for the Exchange of Industrial Resources. If you are, they are often a source of wonderful free materials that can be used in the garden. Ask your school or district agent if you could look at the catalog or go along to one of the “Grab Bags.”

Parents

Some schools send out a parent survey to ask parents directly (but carefully worded) what services, products, or volunteer assistance of time they could contribute. At one school in Massachusetts, a parent was a landscape contractor and donated some fill soil and the use of a bulldozer for a day. This was a hugely helpful in-kind gift, but wasn't something that the parent would have thought of giving to the school had the school not asked.

Wholesalers

Don't forget, as a school, you are a non-profit organization and are entitled to buy from wholesale sources. You will need a copy of your school's Tax ID Form and may need to set up an account with the wholesaler. “Shopping wholesale” usually lends you over 50% off retail price. What a deal! This makes your limited, precious funds go twice as far.

Also, local nurseries often allow you to buy “through them” at “cost.” This allows them to help you access gardening products from wholesale suppliers that you may not be aware of and allows them to help you out without depleting their own resources.

Sample Letter

Request for Donations

Use Your School's Letterhead

Date

ABC Hardware
1111 West 20th St.
Chicago, IL 60666

Dear Mr. Smith:

The children in 3rd and 4th grades of Hawthorne School have planned a school garden that will include a rainbow and poetry garden. They are hoping to install the garden as soon as May Day arrives and they are asking for your help.

Please consider donating some of the tools we will need to build this brand new garden. We need hand trowels, rakes and hoes for our 30 students, 10 of each—or whatever you are able to provide us.

We will have a groundbreaking ceremony on May 1, 2004 in the garden in front of the school on 19th Street. You and your staff are invited to help break ground for the first plants that will go in. The ceremony starts at 10 a.m. Hope you can join us!

Many thanks for your help,

Ms. Susan Jones and the students of the 3rd and 4th of Henderson School

(List your contact information, including telephone number.)

Tip: Have students sign names here or provide a large poster with names, drawings, etc. Include a drawing of the garden plan and ask the donor to select one or more to donate or the cash equivalent.