



Sustainable Schoolyards

Students in the Landscape

NEBRASKA STATEWIDE ARBORETUM

A school garden provides many valuable experiences to students including a chance to connect with and explore nature. Helping design, work in, and explore a garden is an important experience that boosts students self-esteem and promotes creativity.

Plan

The planning process of a new landscape for the school is a great opportunity for many types of lessons. Depending on the landscape and the age of the students, most of the decisions will be made by adults but students can still stretch their critical thinking and math skills by:

- Observing what the school needs from a new landscape
- Forming and defending their opinion of what should go in the garden
- Observing the characteristics of the area and researching plants
- Mapping the new garden space
- Measuring square footage and calculating cubic feet of soil and mulch



Working hard to plant the pre-school pollinator garden

Plant

Helping plant a garden gives students invaluable hands-on experience working with living plants and soil. With some planning and patience, students can be great help planting a new garden. The lessons they learn and pride they take in their work make it worth a little extra time. See [Planting with Volunteers and Students](#) for more tips on how to make planting day run smoothly.

Explore

A sustainable schoolyard is a living laboratory of ongoing experiments and experiences for students. Garden based activities can fit into any academic area (science, math, literature, art social studies, etc.). Gardens give students a real-world setting to learn and apply concepts they have learned in the classroom, giving them meaning and relevance. Unstructured exploration of the schoolyard should also be encouraged giving students a chance to take the initiative to develop and satisfy their curiosity about the world around them.

A Sustainable Schoolyard enriches the lives of students by:

- Engaging them in hands-on learning and challenging them both physically and intellectually
- Encouraging their interest in and compassion for living things
- Motivating students to learn skills in order to achieve real world goals
- Combining traditional and non-traditional teaching methods to reach different learning styles
- Providing a real world connection to classroom lessons



Discovering flowers and seed heads



Identifying native trees



Exploring the wonderful world of trees



Meeting new friends