



Sustainable Schoolyards

# Planting with Students and Volunteers

NEBRASKA STATEWIDE ARBORETUM

## Planting Day

*Most schools rely heavily on volunteer help to both plant and maintain the garden. Volunteers are an important asset, as free and enthusiastic help, and it is important to make everyone feel welcome and appreciated regardless of skill level or physical ability.*



Boy Scouts help plant trees in a city park. Scout troops and youth groups make great volunteers since they have a strong community service focus and adult leadership.

### Tips for planting with volunteers:

- Communicate with possible volunteer groups well in advance giving them a chance to plan for an activity day. Groups to contact may include: parents, PTO, Booster Club, Kiwanis, Lions Club and other community groups dedicated to volunteer service.
- Take time to have someone explain proper planting procedures before you begin. This starts everyone on the same page and can eliminate a lot of questions or extra work fixing problems later.
- Spread out the work if your project is large and don't try to do too much at one time. It is better to plant in stages than to wear out your volunteers.
- Plan for social time after planting such as cookies and lemonade or a party to show your appreciation. Knowing that this reward is waiting can also help keep volunteers focused during planting

## Planting with Students

Planting is a wonderful time to involve students. They get hands-on, authentic experience working in a garden and observing nature. Allowing students to help plant gives them a sense of accomplishment and helps them realize the impact they can make. However, helping students plant takes some extra time, patience and planning.

### Tips for planting with students:

- Choose the group wisely: recognize which classes are likely to gain the most from helping plant. Choosing a group that works well together is likely to make the experience more educational and successful.
- Work with specific interest groups such as: FFA, 4-H, Scouts and after school clubs. These groups may have a more personal interest in the project and may already have some practical experience.
- Limit the size of the group to a number that can comfortably work next to each other in the garden. Keeping the ratio of adults to students high also helps ensure the success of the project.
- Create mentors by first teaching older students how to do a task and letting them help younger students plant, mulch, water and weed.

### Plan ahead for a successful planting day:

- Choose small plant sizes whenever possible
- Have garden bed prep already done
- Have all tools and mulch on site
- Have water and snacks available
- Lay out plants in the garden bed before volunteers arrive
- Have water available for both volunteers and plants



Having plants laid out ahead of time makes it easy for volunteers to understand where things go, saves time and prevents confusion.