



**Sustainable Schoolyards**

# A Long Term Investment

NEBRASKA STATEWIDE ARBORETUM

## Create a Maintenance Plan

A landscape isn't finished when the planting is done, in fact it has just begun! Limiting the labor required for maintenance after the plants are established is an important goal of a sustainable landscape, but there will always be some work required. Identifying what will need to be done and having a plan for who will do the work helps keep maintenance needs from overwhelming the enjoyment and functionality of the garden.



Helping take care of a garden is a great opportunity for students to get close to plants and explore the landscape.

## EARLY MAINTENANCE (FIRST 2-3 YEARS)

- **Watering:** the first few weeks after planting the garden will require frequent water. After the plants have had a chance to establish roots you can back off to weekly or less depending on the weather. For the next couple years they will still need water during dry periods.
- **Weeding:** is especially important when starting with plants in small containers. Help the plants fill in by removing weed competition.
- **Clean-up:** The plants will always need to be cut back in the spring and may need a new layer of mulch. The plants should be spaced closely so that less and less mulch is needed over time.

## LONG TERM MAINTENANCE

- Watering: the plants may still need help during a drought but if hardy species were chosen they will be self-sufficient most years.
- Weeding: if the plants were spaced properly they should shade or crowd out most weeds. It is still a good idea to remove early spring weeds or large, aggressive species.
- Clean-up: last years plant material will always need to be cut back and removed in the spring.
- Enhancement Planting: perennial plants can be long lived but over time some will need to be replaced. Keep an eye out each year, it is easier to replace 2 or 3 plants than a whole area of landscaping.

Weeding and watering are simple maintenance tasks that students can help with in the garden.



## Longevity

With all the hard work and money that goes into creating a school landscape, it's something that should be around for many years. Unfortunately, a landscape often gets lost in the shuffle during busy years or transition of administrators and teachers. Take time to deliberately plan future maintenance and campaign for the landscape to ensure that it remains an important part of the schoolyard for years to come.