

Working Draft
Frequently Asked Questions
**Gardening and Nutrition Initiatives for Healthy Youth
in Arlington, Virginia**

Prepared for April 6, 2015 “Growing Green Schools”

A project co-sponsored by the APS Superintendent’s Advisory Committee on Sustainability and the FitArlington Healthy Community Action Team

1. What free resources are available in Arlington County for schools to use with respect to gardening and nutrition programs?

- Virginia Cooperative Extension Arlington - <http://offices.ext.vt.edu/arlington/>
- Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia - <http://mgnv.org/>
- Master Food Volunteers - <http://www.apsva.us/greenscene>
- Master Naturalists - <http://armn.org/>
- Reevesland Learning Center (composting, planting, cooking, etc.) - Joan Horwitt shorwitt@aol.com
- Garden talks at Central Library mid-March through October - <http://library.arlingtonva.us/events/garden-talks/>
- Free mulch through the County - <http://recycling.arlingtonva.us/residential/mulch-dirt/>
- Virginia Cooperative Extension free classes on plant disease, insect control, composting, native plants and more - Calendar of events at <http://www.MGNV.org>
- Videos of green school projects at APS Green Scene - <http://www.apsva.us/greenscene>
- APSGreenSchools email listserv- <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/apsgreenschools/info>
- VCE Horticulture Help Desk offers in person assistance between 9am and 12pm at the Fairlington Community Center 3308 S. Stafford St. Information seekers can also call in to the Help desk at 703 228 6414 or send emails including photos to mgarlalex@gmail.com.
- VCE Master Gardener volunteer staffed plant clinics are offered at local libraries and farmer’s markets, and 5 demonstration gardens throughout Arlington and Alexandria are maintained for purposes of public education - <http://ww.mgnv.org>.
- The Nutrition and Family Consumer Sciences program of the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) offers free nutrition programs for schools that cover topics including MyPlate, Healthy Snacks, Trying new foods, Physical activity, Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids, Teen Cuisine - <http://offices.ext.vt.edu/arlington/>

2. How do other schools maintain their gardens and grounds?

- That is what Growing Green Schools is going to help us understand! Some have monthly garden work days during spring and fall. Some use outside volunteers. Some have after school clubs. Some use PTA funding to pay an outside contractor for help with their outdoor classroom.. Some landscapers donate care of school garden grounds. Gardening companies may also offer assistance or supplies.

3. What are some community agencies and businesses that have been recipients of school gardening donations or who have partnered with or donated to outdoor classroom efforts?

- Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) – <http://www.afac.org/>
- EarthSangha - <http://www.earthsangha.org/>
- Chipotle
- Lawns2Lettuce for Lunch
- Nature by Design native plants-focused landscaping center
- Greenstreet Gardens landscaping center

4. What are some other sources of possible volunteers that can assist with gardening and nutrition efforts?

- Edu Futuro <http://www.edu-futuro.org/>
- Virginia Cooperative Extension – Arlington <http://offices.ext.vt.edu/arlington/>
- Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia <http://mgnv.org/>
- Master Food Volunteers - <http://www.ext.vt.edu/topics/food-health/master-food-volunteer/index.html>
- Master Naturalists - <http://armn.org/>
- Community Volunteer Network (CVN) <http://volunteer.truist.com/acvo/org/2710883.html>
- 4-H - http://offices.ext.vt.edu/arlington/programs/4h/4h_get_involved.html
- Master Gardeners offer Speaker's Bureau services and Garden Coaching services that can be requested by contacting the VCE Horticulture Help Desk at 703.228.6414 or emailing mgarlalex@gmail.com. Master Gardeners can also offer: training to volunteers on community garden management, Junior Master Gardener curriculum, and the full VCE volunteer Master Gardener training that is conducted annually.
- Eagle Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts
- National Honor Society
- Retirement communities
- Organizations and businesses that tie to a school's focus (language, STEM, arts, etc.)
- Student Service Learning and Community Service

5. What is APS doing with Farm to School projects and Farm Fridays, and how can I get my school involved?

- Farm to School Friday is new for the 2014-15 school year. It is run by Angel McMahan, Farm to School Coordinator for APS. This is a new position for the 14-15 SY and is part of the Food and Nutrition Services office, which has partnered with local farmers Chris and Sara Guerre from Maple Avenue Market and Farm to bring fresh-from-the-farm recipes for students to sample. The goal is to visit every school at least once this year, so if the program hasn't yet been to your school, please contact Angel to host an event. Angel McMahan 703-228-6079 or angela.mcmahan@apsva.us
- Follow @APSlunchrocks on Twitter for more info and photos of past events. See <http://www.arlington.k12.va.us/Page/28710>

6. What free resources are available for gardening and nutrition initiatives in general?

In DC/Metro DC/Virginia

- Tuckahoe Elementary's Discovery Schoolyard resources - <http://www.apsva.us/domain/1423> and outdoor curriculum - <http://www.apsva.us/domain/1425>
- Arlington Central Library - new Tool Library in The Shed - free tools available to borrow - <http://library.arlingtonva.us/programs/health-and-fitness/garden-tool-lending-program/>
- APS School Health Advisory Board (SHAB) meets bi monthly - <http://apsshab.weebly.com/> - and is on Facebook
- APS Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Sustainability meets monthly – contact Cathy Lin, Energy Manager, cathy.lin@apsva.us, 703-228-7731
- FitArlington Healthy Community Action Team - <http://topics.arlingtonva.us/fitarlington/arlington-healthy-community-action-team/>
- Virginia Farm-to-School - <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/marketing/farm.shtml>
- FoodPrints - <http://www.foodprintsdc.com/>
- Kid Power and Veggie Time - <http://www.kidpowerdc.org/>
- PERMIE KIDS - <https://www.permiekids.com/>
- Real Food for Kids - <http://www.realfoodforkids.org/>
- DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) - School Garden Program <http://osse.dc.gov/service/school-garden-program-sgp>
- Garden Adventures: Website Links, Food and Nutrition, Story Time and Vegetable Growing - <http://goo.gl/jhXoJY>

Nationally:

- USDA Farm-to-School - <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school>
- Veggication - <http://www.veggiecation.com/>
- USDA Ag in the Classroom with Matrix curriculum on Pinterest - <http://www.agclassroom.org/>
- Eco-Schools USA, NWF Federation sponsored framework for sustainability, through school community Eco-Action teams - <http://www.nwf.org/eco-schools-usa.aspx>
- Collective School Garden Network - <http://www.csgn.org/gene>
- The Edible Schoolyard Project - <http://edibleschoolyard.org/>
- Garden Detective Newsletter, Issues 1-10, which are four page newsletter for parents with various activities related to gardening. They are intended for use in conjunction with the Great Garden Detective Adventure curriculum in the classroom. You can order the entire curriculum for free if your school participates in the School Lunch or School Breakfast program. The curriculum is for 3rd and 4th graders, but of course teachers can adapt it to their classroom. You can download the curriculum and each newsletter at this link: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/great-garden-detective>
- Dig In! at Home Parent Booklet in English and in Spanish. See this link to download it in pdf: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/dig-home-parent-booklet>. It's meant to be used w/ the Dig In Curriculum for 5th and 6th Graders in the classrooms, and teachers can order them for free if their school participates in the School lunch or breakfast programs. Check it out here: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/dig-standards-based-nutrition-education-ground>

7. What kind of fundraising activities have other schools undertaken to support gardens and nutrition activities?

- The organizers of Growing Green Schools hope to learn more from this event! Some schools have used a spring fair, concert, or some kind of special fundraising event to raise money that goes to gardening and nutrition. These events might include silent auctions or raffles. Specific campaigns within the school for specific issues can work as well. When Campbell Elementary needed to raise a significant amount of money to build its Wetlands Learning Lab, a special spell-a-thon was held with students getting pledges for words that were connected to the wetlands project. Campbell also held a benefit concert that later morphed into a spring Wetlands Festival and an annual fundraiser.
- There are also many grant opportunities that Arlington schools have participated in, including:
 - Whole Kids grant through the Whole Kids Foundation - <https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/index.php/schools/school-garden-grant-program>
 - Eat Well, Do Well Challenge Grant from Silver Diner - <http://www.silverdiner.com/grantwinners>

8. How have other schools used PTA funds to support teacher training?

- Schools might bring in an expert to train teachers on outdoor learning. Campbell Elementary is welcoming a naturalist from Huntley Meadows Park on April 22 to do a professional development on nature journals.
- Carlin Springs is working with local nonprofit Lands and Waters - <http://landsandwaters.org/>
- Contacts that offer workshops and/or consultation:
 - Mary Van Dyke, Green STEM Learning, maryvandyke4@gmail.com
 - Christy Przystawik, Food Prints, christyprzystawik@gmail.com
 - Nancy Striniste, EarlySpace, nancy@earllyspace.com
 - Kirsten Buhls, Ag and Natural Resources Agent, kbuhls@vt.edu
 - Emily Reiersgaard, 4-H Youth Development Agent, emilyr@vt.edu
 - Katie Strong, Nutrition Specialist, kstrong@vt.edu
 - Joan Horwitt, The Reevesland Learning Center, shorwitt@aol.com

9. What are some ways to promote interest in curriculum connections with gardening, STEM education and environmental education?

- Students who participate in EarthForce gain knowledge toward environmental stewardship - <http://www.earthforce.org/>
- Eco-Schools promotes environmental stewardship - <http://www.eco-schools.org/>
- The Expeditionary Learning (EL) model promotes environmental stewardship (Campbell Elementary is the only EL school in Virginia) - <http://elschools.org/>
- The organization NoVA Outside shares many professional learning opportunities that it organizes and that it compiles in its monthly newsletter - <http://novaoutside.org/>

10. How have other schools used PTA funds to hire a consultant or contracted teacher to assist with outdoor and/or nutrition lessons? How does payment work?

- Jamestown PTA paying consultant for part-time “Visiting Horticulturalist” 250 hours
- Patrick Henry PTA paying for consultant on project basis
- Campbell PTA paying consultant “Garden Docent”
- Many other PTAs funding outdoor learning projects
- Use of engaged and committed volunteers, need to extend learning at an outdoor learning-focused school, proposing/defining a position, submitting for PTA approval, etc.

11. Are there any guidelines on cooking activities in the classroom? What kinds of equipment have other schools purchased to assist with cooking lessons?

- Campbell Elementary has an induction burner and is slowly building its set of kitchen tools.
- Check out Edible Schoolyard and FoodPrintsdc.com for more ideas.

12. Can we try beekeeping at our school? How would we start?

- APS does not have insurance that covers bee hives on school property. So, if an accident were to occur (e.g., bee sting with allergic reaction, animal bite, injury to animals) the person responsible for bringing the animals to school would be liable.
- Beekeeping for honeybees is not regulated in Arlington, but for allergy considerations, it’s important to follow best practices.
- Consult the Beekeepers Association of Northern Virginia - <http://www.beekeepersnova.org/>
- Contact 4-H Beekeeper Brenda Kiessling
- Beekeeping is successful at Kellam HS in Virginia Beach also at George Mason University Campus - contact Mary Van Dyke for details
- Also teach about VA’s 400 native bee species - build a bee hotel and they will come!
- Plant pollinator native plants to attract bees and other pollinators e.g. Milkweed, Mountain Mint Helianthus, Rudbeckia, Coneflowers, Monarda, Goldenrod and many others in places where you can maintain these vigorous plants - see <http://www.PlantNovaNatives.org>
- Plant lavender as a “Colonial Herb” plant and enjoy associated teaching about herbs
- Invite Arlington Nature Center staff to visit with students to teach about native bees and honey bees.
- Virginia 4-H Beekeeping booklet downloadable at http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/380/380-070/380-070_pdf.pdf
- Bee Basics: An Introduction to our Native Bees by Beatriz Moissett and Stephen Buchmann from the USDA Forest Service and Pollinator Partnership - http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5306468.pdf

13. Can we have chickens on our school grounds using a company like Rent-a-Coop?

- APS does not have insurance that covers chicken coops on school property. So, if an accident were to occur (e.g., bee sting with allergic reaction, animal bite, injury to animals) the person responsible for bringing the animals to school would be liable.
- Uncertain at this time. Zoning regulations for residences state that chickens may not be kept unless in a building no less than 100 feet from any street or lot line. Organizers of Growing Green Schools are looking into the feasibility of short-term trials like Rent-a-Coop for schools.
- Through the Farm to School program, Maple Avenue Farm has brought chickens to schools for a few hours as part of a demonstration. Contact 4-H for information about egg incubation programs.

14. If we have questions about drainage/storm water issues before we start planting, who should we contact?

- Cathy Lin, Energy Manager – cathy.lin@apsva.us, 703-228-7731

15. What are some activities we can do during the winter months related to gardening and nutrition?

- The Reevesland Learning Center promotes: growing pea shoots indoors to teach about plant parts and provide a healthy snack; "trench" composting in the fall and winter to improve outside soil; planting garlic and cover crops in the fall and to measure growth over the school year. Contact: Joan Horwitt shorwitt@aol.com
- Suggestions from Campbell Elementary's garden docent:
 - November: harvest fall crops, add row cover, cut back and dry perennial herbs, lasagna garden the cleared plots
 - December: indoor bulbs, worm compost bins, use dried herbs, sprouting
 - January: bird houses/feeders, plan indoor seed starting (need space for grow lights), research seeds, order seeds, plan Spring garden, tend worm bins,
 - February: start seedlings indoors: marigolds, lettuces, kale, swiss chard, herbs; survey garden beds; clear fallen branches; check for signs of damage; prune fruit trees & grape vines
- Consider building cold frames or a greenhouse
- Ask parents to send away for seed catalogs and use in the classroom to plan potential gardens (great math & art activity)
 - Mineral, Virginia-based Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, 540.894.9480 - <http://www.southernexposure.com>
 - <http://www.botanicalinterests.com>
 - <http://www.rareseeds.com>
 - <http://www.cooksgarden.com>
 - <http://www.burpee.com>
 - <http://www.seedsavers.org>
 - <http://www.groworganic.com>
 - <http://www.highmowingseeds.com/organic-seed-catalog-request>

16. What irrigation and summer watering solutions have other schools used?

- At Jamestown, custodians assist with summer watering.
- Some schools ask for families or staff to sign up to take weekly shifts or tend to certain plots ("adopt-a-bed").
- Consider where you leave the water key so that it is accessible outside summer office hours.
- Drip irrigation and a timer is a significant investment but makes a big difference and allows for harvesting all summer long. For more information, see <http://www.organicgardening.com/learn-and-grow/beginners-guide-drip-irrigation>
- Consider late planting in summer so that crops like tomatoes, basil, pumpkins, gourds, sunflowers and flowers for fall pollinators (French Marigolds, rudbeckia, coneflowers, goldenrod) will still be producing when students return in September.
- Consider seeding a covercrop in June and leaving over summer without maintenance to September, and then digging in and planting quick-growing salads in the fall.

17. Where have some schools taken children on field trips related to gardening and/or nutrition?

- Reevesland Learning Garden in Arlington - Contact: Joan Horwitt shorwitt@aol.com
- Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture in Alexandria (south of the Beltway) - <http://arcadiafood.org/>
- Green Springs Garden Park in Alexandria (near Annandale) - <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/greenspring>
- Potomac Overlook NVRP has a Master Gardeners Demonstration Vegetable Garden and focus on energy in the center - http://www.nvrpa.org/park/potomac_overlook/content/interpretive_garden
- Arlington Central Library has demonstrated vegetable garden growing for Arlington Food Assistance Center showing many different techniques

18. What protocol is required for embarking on building projects at a school?

- There is an established application system for PTA and other externally sponsored projects. The application form typically comes through the school principals and goes up through an APS approval chain related to the value and complexity of the proposed project. The application refers to the related Policy Implementation Procedures (PIPs) which can be found under the “School Board Policy” section of the APS web site. The form can be obtained from principals or from Facilities and Maintenance by calling 703-228-6620.
- The key concern is sustainability. Decisions on garden projects typically depend on the commitment for sustained maintenance by others, not by APS grounds crew. The Facilities and Maintenance department wants to guard against projects falling into disrepair if they cannot be maintained when a group of volunteers graduates or moves on.
- Projects are considered on a case-by-case basis. Availability may be limited for oversight of larger projects if they are pursued during the busy Minor Construction/Major Maintenance program season.
- Director of Maintenance, Jim Meikle, holds seats on the Urban Forestry and the Parks and Recreation Commission.

19. What are other local events related to gardening & nutrition (and see workshops above)

- Rooting DC – late February/early March - <http://rootingdc.org/>
- Grow Your Health – March - <http://www.growyourhealthnova.com/>
- First Virginia Farm-to-School conference was held in March 2015 - <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/marketing/f2sconference.shtml>
- VCE Urban Agriculture Symposium likely to be October 3 or 10, 2015
- Check the Virginia Cooperative Extension calendar - <http://offices.ext.vt.edu/arlington/>
- Food Day, October 24 – <http://www.foodday.org/>
- Check out Real Food For Kids calendar of events - <http://www.realfoodforkids.org/>

20. What are some upcoming events related to gardening, nutrition, and healthy youth?

- Thursday, April 9, 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. NoVA Outside School Environmental Action Showcase, George Mason University - <http://novaoutside.org/>. Registration for school participation is closed, but come yourself and check out the event to plan for next year!
- Saturday, April 11, 1:30pm: Green Springs Garden Park Children’s Cherry Blossom Celebration - <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/greenspring/ed-children.htm>
- Wednesday, April 22: Friends of Urban Agriculture kick-off interest meeting. Contact Kimberly Haun, Arlington Urban Agriculture Coordinator, at khaun@arlingtonva.us for more information
- Saturday, April 25: Earth Day Alexandria - <http://alexandriava.gov/EarthDay>
- Saturday, May 2, 4-7 p.m. Campbell Elementary School Wetlands Festival - <http://campbellschool.org/>
- Monday, May 11, 6-9 p.m.: Cooking up Networks and S'mores: NoVA Outside Professional Development and Networking Meeting, Hidden Oaks Nature Center in Annandale - <http://novaoutside.org/>
- Tuesday, May 19: Deadline for The Google Science Fair Submission Deadline <https://www.google-sciencefair.com/en/how-to-enter>
- Thursday, May 21: 7-9 p.m.: Talk and book signing by Nina Planck, farmers market advocate and author of *Real Food and Real Food for Mother & Baby*, Holistic Moms Network Arlington/Alexandria chapter, <http://holisticmomsaralex.blogspot.com/>
- See also Arlington County Nature Center programs: <http://parks.arlingtonva.us/parksfacilities/nature-centers-programs/>
- Summer Career Center 2015 Enrichment Program for students entering 4th – 12th Grade include: Kids in the Kitchen Learning to Cook, rising 4th –6th Grade and one week only Urban Agriculture and Environmental Science and Engineering, rising 7th – 12th Grade. See <http://www.apsva.us/cc/enrichment> and email Georganna.schell@apsva.us for more information.

This document will be archived at the FitArlington Health Community Action Team website:

<http://topics.arlingtonva.us/fitarlington/arlington-healthy-community-action-team/>

Volunteers for “Growing Green Schools” hope to update the document periodically.

For suggested edits and additions to this document, or to learn more about efforts related to Growing Green Schools, please contact GrowingGreenSchools@gmail.com

Join the **APSGreenSchools** email list to stay connected to green initiatives in Arlington:

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/apsgreenschools/info>