



Starting a School Garden:

The Checklist

Please go in order and check off each item as you plan your school garden
Updated: 09/2018

Questions To Ask Before Beginning Your Garden

- Do I have Administrative support? Getting your principal on board is a pivotal step to ensure your garden continues. Please inform them of your plans and ideas beforehand.
- What other teachers and community members can collaborate and commit to this garden project? School staff, PTA, OST clubs among others can all be valuable helpers. The biggest challenge to school gardens is sustainability. Without support and dedication a garden cannot survive through summer break and long weekends in the hot sun.
- How am I funding this garden? There are costs associated with starting a garden. APS supports gardens with soil and seeds but items like tools and garden beds need to be considered. Please be aware timed irrigation can only be provided by an outside contractor and can be very expensive.
- Is this sustainable? We're adding this again because it's just that important! What steps are in place to make sure this space will be maintained and cared for? One person cannot handle the responsibility alone. Have a garden team in place before moving onto the next checklist.

The Garden Space

- ☑ Do I have enough sunlight? You will need at least 6-8 hours of direct sunlight for your garden.
- ☑ How's my soil? Are you planning on composting? The healthier your soil, the healthier your harvest will be!
- ☑ Where is my water source? You will need to figure out the watering situation. This may be as easy as turning on a nearby hose or it could take a little work to figure out your school's process. This is a critical step so really think about the manner you wish to water your garden very carefully!
- ☑ What do we want to grow? Is this a salsa or pizza garden? Are you focused on herbs? Looking into sensory gardens or pollinator spaces? Think about what you kind of garden you would like and the amount of room it will take to accomplish your goals. Be sure to include your students in this process. This space is for them!
- ☑ How will I use this garden? Is this garden for a club? Culinary resource? A schoolwide outdoor classroom? Do we want our garden to have a mission statement? Who will use the garden and what kind of access and space will that require?



Contacting the APS School Garden Team

- Now that you have a plan in place, contact us! We can help you navigate the channels you need to get your garden growing!

Mallory Garcia (APS School Garden Coordinator)
505-855-5275 mallory.garcia@aps.edu

Cynthia Grajeda (Student Wellness Coordinator)
505-855-9812 grajeda@aps.edu

Once you have contacted APS School Gardens we will help you get in touch with the following people:

- ☑ **Facility, Design and Construction (505)848-8810.** We contact FD&C to check on any future construction at your school. We ensure the space you have for your garden is not in danger of getting removed due to any upcoming renovations.
- ☑ **Maintenance and Operations (505-830-8080)** First, we'll check to make sure the ground you are using has not been treated with any kind of pesticides or weed killers before planting an edible garden. We also spot check for underground water or electrical lines that you may hit during the construction of your garden.
- ☑ **Irrigation-** M&O also handles irrigation. We schedule on-site inspections to check existing irrigation that may exist at your school. There may be capped bubblers or irrigation systems in place you didn't know about. This is a huge step- please do not set up your own irrigation before this inspection!
- ☑ **Heavy Equipment-** This M&O department can help you with soil orders/pick up. It requires a work order and 3-5 days notice which we can help you set up when the time is right to work outside.

Helpful Resources

When you have completed all of the necessary steps mentioned above, you can place a work order for free soil that can be delivered to your school. [The Soil and Mulch Guide](#) is included on the webpage and will help guide you through creating a work order. If you are curious about the best kind of fruits and vegetables to plant in our dry New Mexico climate you can refer to NMSU Bernalillo County Extension's guide: [Growing Zones and Crop Varieties in NM](#) located on the Start a Garden section of the website. You can also request seeds on the website through the [Seed Order Form](#).

There are many ways to find curriculum that will tie into state standards that also teach about local climate, soil, and seeds. Some good places to start include:

[The Indian Pueblo Curriculum](http://indianpueblo.org/learn/teachers/) (indianpueblo.org/learn/teachers/)

[Ag in the Classroom](http://agclassroom.org) (agclassroom.org)

[The Nature Conservancy](http://natureworkseverywhere.org) (natureworkseverywhere.org)

Garden FAQs

1. [How do we get tools/gloves/raised beds?](#)

Unfortunately we cannot fund these types of resources for every school garden. However, we can help you organize community days, create fundraisers, and draft donation requests to help you purchase or receive the materials you need. We also list current grants in our monthly newsletter which you can access on our webpage.

2. [Can we use school lunches as part of our compost?](#)

Yes! We encourage schools to compost and to teach students about the importance of conservation and creating less waste while creating healthy soil. If you are interested in composting, please reach out to your cafeteria manager and custodial staff. We want to give them a heads up and ask what steps can be done to make sure you're being safe, helpful, and respectful of the time and energy they put into their cafeteria space. Remember- this is a project for students and should not be placed on anyone who is not able/interested in participating.

3. [Can we have rain barrels at our school?](#)

Yes! This is another area where we would love to assist you. We can help get the necessary steps in order to make sure your barrels are safe, secure, and sustainable! Please be aware APS does not provide rain barrels. Funds for barrels would need to be donated or provided by individual schools.

4. [Will APS pay for our irrigation system?](#)

M&O does fix existing irrigation if you are having problems but does not pay for new irrigation lines. If your school is interested in installing new irrigation, we can help you get in touch with APS contractors for estimates.

5. [Can I have chickens at my school?](#)

NMSU does provide an incubation demonstration for schools using chicks and ducklings through 4H. We encourage schools to look into this program but please note that no chicken or ducks may remain on campus per APS guidelines.

If there is anything we missed, please don't hesitate to reach out or look for more information on the APS Garden website:

<http://www.aps.edu/coordinated-school-health/wellness/aps-school-gardens>