



Facilities Department

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SCHOOL GARDENS

FACILITIES STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

Saint Paul Public Schools endeavors to support the community and educational benefits inherent in school gardens and outdoor learning spaces. Through the application of these standards for the implementation and maintenance of these amenities, safe, responsible and sustainable gardens can be achieved.

What is a School Garden?

A school garden is defined as a space where people work together to plant and tend an area, and is:

- Created and used by students for educational purposes;
- Supervised by school staff;
- Maintained by students, school staff, and/or school-based parent organizations such as PTA/PTO;

Examples include Growing and Learning Gardens, Peace Gardens, Perennial Gardens, and Outdoor Classrooms. Food Gardens and Salsa Gardens may have additional guidelines and health department requirements if any food grown is served to students and staff.

Who can spearhead the effort to create a school garden?

Schools, individual grades or classes, Parent-Teacher Organizations, may all approach a school's leadership about creating a school garden. If the school determines that the garden meets the mission of the school, then the school principal formally becomes the applicant for approval.

What is the process for getting approval to create a school garden?

In order to create successful, long-lasting gardens, the following steps must be taken prior to starting to implement a school garden:

Contact Facilities- Environmental Services Group (Chelsea Moody, chelsea.moody@spps.org) to inform interest in creating a school garden or expanding a current one.

A complete application will have the following:

- A site plan, drawn to scale, of the school garden.
- Garden Grand Plan submitted by the Principal, to include:
 - Garden description and goals.
 - A maintenance plan detailing year-round maintenance schedule / expectations as well as the plan for transitioning the primary responsibility of the garden as current leaders cease to be involved.
 - Provision to indemnify, defend and hold the District harmless from any injuries, damages or losses, including costs and attorney's fees arising from the willful or negligent acts or omissions of the gardeners, their employees, officers, guests and invitees.

Once the Garden Grand Plan and supplementary information are completed, the school principal will email to Environmental Services and the Manager of Facility Planning for final site review and an MOU will be sent to the principal and garden coordinator to sign.

Saint Paul Public Schools Facilities Department, in consultation with the Department of Security and Emergency Management, will review the stakeholder documents to:

- Verify the intended layout adheres to the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), allowing for natural surveillance of the site from public areas and streets.
- Ensure that grounds maintenance and snow removal will not be impeded by the creation of the school garden.
- Verify stormwater runoff will not be negatively affected by the creation of the school garden.

What are the costs to establish a school garden?

There are no costs for applying or submitting proposal for a school garden. Costs for building a school garden will vary based on the type and scale of garden as well as volunteer effort organized. The school or organizing body is responsible for all costs for installing, maintaining and using the school garden.

How do I put my approved school garden in?

Since it is expected that most gardens will be installed by volunteers, certain guidelines must be adhered to in order to maintain a safe and orderly construction process, this includes but not limited to:

- All underground utilities must be marked prior to any work occurring on site. Call Gopher State One Call (651.454.0002) at least 48 hours prior to start of construction and they will mark the location of buried utilities for free.
- All digging must be done with hand tools only. Saint Paul Public Schools does not supply any tools.
- If, at any point, questions of safety or unforeseen conditions arise STOP THE WORK and contact Facilities. Safety is always the first priority.

Full requirements for installation will be outlined in the MOU prior to construction

At the completion of work, the Garden Coordinator is to notify Facility Planning, as outlined in MOU. Facility Planning will do an on-site inspection to ensure that the garden adheres to the approved design layout.

What are the district standards for a school garden?

In an effort to promote safety and security, limit liability and ensure that all applicable codes are followed, all school gardens must adhere to the following mandates:

School gardens must be kept neat and orderly year round. It is the responsibility of the school to enforce this standard.

- All food must be grown in a walled raised bed that is 18" or higher (ADA compliant) in soil that is from the District or a commercial source. Raised beds shall not be constructed of lumber treated with chemicals. Cedar is recommended.
- All plants recognized as a noxious weed by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture must be promptly eradicated. Failure to control noxious weeds will result in immediate removal of the garden. Consult MN Department of Agriculture for the latest list.¹
- Unless given prior written approval by Facilities, school gardens are not to be located on primary building faces.
- Gardens may not be located within one-third the length of the face of the building from the primary and secondary entrances to the building.
- No utilities, temporary or permanent, may be installed as part of the garden. Similarly, no water storage containers, such as a rain barrel, may be housed on site.

¹ Please note, that noxious weeds are those that must be controlled for due to their disruption of natural ecosystems or agricultural systems. In urban areas, it is unlikely to have them and commercial sources are forbidden to sell them. "Invasive weeds" is a lesser category which are typically not native to Minnesota and grow aggressively in our climate. These should also be avoided, but they do not carry the same penalty for failing to control noxious weeds.

- Exterior hose bibs are to be used strictly when gardeners are on site (i.e. sprinklers on timers cannot be used). Hose bib keys, given out at the sole discretion of the Site Administrator, are to be maintained in a secure lock-box when not in use.
- No structure taller than 3 feet may be constructed without written approval by the Director of Facilities.
- Tools need to be stored in an enclosed structure if on-site. No enclosed structures (such as tool storage sheds) may be constructed.
- Compost bins are to be located at least two feet away from the building, have a good appearance, located in a non-prominent location and are to be visually transparent (constructed of hardware cloth and lumber).
- All gardening is to be organic / pesticide-free. No chemical herbicides or fertilizers may be on site at any time.

School gardens that fail to meet all of the above standards:

- Schools shall receive one warning that the garden is not in compliance with these standards via e-mail to the Principal and Garden Coordinator on record.
- From the date of the email notification, the school has 14 days to correct the issue(s).
- If the issue is not addressed and there is not a plan in place to do so, the garden will be removed and the area re-seeded with grass at the expense of the school.

Saint Paul Public Schools retains the right to repurpose the area of the school garden if, in the District's sole opinion, it is in the District's best interest.

Please feel free to call the Facilities One-Stop (651.744.1800) with any questions!