

# The History of School Gardens

The concept of school gardens is not a new one. A look back through history reveals the first school garden in the US was established in 1891 in Roxbury, Massachusetts. From there, school gardens grew in popularity throughout the early 1900s, with 75,000 school gardens in existence by 1906. War Gardens during World War I and Victory Gardens during World War II show the value placed on both the educational component and the urgency felt to contribute to the national food supply. School gardens were considered an essential part of childhood education. In 1906, Louise Klein Miller wrote:

“Gardening is essentially practical. There is nothing better fitted for the healthful development of children. It affords opportunity for spontaneous activity in the open air, and possibilities for acquiring a fund of interesting and related information; it engenders habits of thrift and economy; develops individual responsibility, and respect for the rights of others; requires regularity, punctuality, and constancy of purpose.”



Hine, Lewis Wickes, photographer (1917) School garden - Jefferson School. Location: Muskogee, Oklahoma. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-nclc-00686. National Child Labor Committee Collection.

Then and now, participation in a school garden program offers students educational and healthy lifestyle opportunities. There is widespread agreement on these advantages, however, resources and knowledge on how to create and operate a school garden are more challenging. The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension has a variety of free resources to provide practical assistance in creating and maintaining a school garden in accordance with science and safety guidelines.