



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

**Cooperative Extension**

Maricopa County

## **Considerations – Timelines and Action Plans**

Creating a timeline for starting, maintaining, or upgrading a school garden can contribute toward success with your project. Often these projects take longer than expected or end up costing more than planned.

For planning a school garden, it can help to start at the end and work backwards. For example, if you want to plant seeds in a new raised bed that hasn't been built, start thinking about the following:

- **Harvesting:** I want the students to taste a vegetable during the school year, so the seeds need to go into the ground by this date
- **Planting:** To plant my seeds, I need the soil and amendments in the raised bed frame by this date (if adding steer manure I need it to rest for 3 weeks prior to planting)
  - Determine what will be planted
  - Purchase seeds
- **Soil and Amendments:** I need to order the soil to be delivered or bags purchased and have them delivered so I can have time to mix the amendments into the soil
- **Raised Bed Frame:** I need to construct the frame, set it in place, and make sure it is level
  - Cut any wood and allow time for students to paint or decorate the sides
  - Order or acquire selected materials
  - Determine the frame material and costs
  - Determine the location of the raised bed

There may be other steps you need to consider for your situation, but it helps to put together a timeline so you don't get disappointed because you didn't start early enough. Be sure to build in extra time in case something doesn't meet your timeline. With any project there are always dependencies like funding or volunteer help.

## Sample Timeline

Projected Harvest Date	Planting Date	Soil & Soil Amendments Ready	Construction Completed & in Place	Raised Bed Materials Selected & Purchased	Location finalized & Irrigation in Place
Finish					Start

Other important considerations that should be factored into any timeline by the garden coordinator:

- **Volunteers**
  - Find someone who has the time to stay involved for a complete school year and beyond if possible
  - Completing the school district (if appropriate) volunteer application and pass the appropriate background checks (most districts have the application on their website, if not, contact their main office.)
  
- **Education About Food Safety**
  - All adults that work in the school garden should have a basic understanding of the safe handling of foods grown in the school gardens, particularly if one of the goals is to have students taste what is grown
  - Have all adults working with students in the garden review the University of Arizona publication, School Gardens Food Safety Guidelines <https://cals.arizona.edu/agliteracy/sites/cals.arizona.edu/agliteracy/files/U-A-School-Garden-Food-Safety-Guidelines.pdf>
  
- **Building a Schedule of Garden Activities and Exercises**
  - Once a garden is planted, students should have garden-related activities to keep their interest while they are waiting for the seeds to grow. Select grade-appropriate activities to do each week.
  
- **Providing School Faculty and Staff with Basic Gardening Best Practices**
  - School faculty and staff, even those not directly involved in the garden, should have basic knowledge of best garden practices. This helps to develop support and understanding of the garden's place within the school, expanding curriculum use, and awareness of possible issues or concerns like leaking irrigation or garden safety.

Now that you've developed a Timeline for your garden goals, an Action Plan can help you in successfully implementing them. The action plan can allow you to break up the larger tasks of school garden development and management into smaller, more manageable aspects, allowing the garden committee to delegate tasks, and quickly manage the gardens progress and possible issues as they occur. An action plan also provides you with valuable information for when you later expand your garden. Knowing how long a garden project took, who was in charge before, costs, materials and issues had can be valuable information for garden maintenance, expansions, and annual reporting. They can be immensely helpful in keeping your school garden sustainable.

The following is an example of the different steps you may go through. Depending on your current situation you may not need to consider some of the topics listed below. An example of this would be if you school may already have support of the administration or have a school garden committee. Your situation may require additional topics and many more items. For each topic you will find the following items to consider in the planning process. **Remember be flexible!**

Items to consider:

- *# – the number of the objective for a particular goal*
- *Objective Description - a step towards completing the goal*
- *Task Description – an activity necessary to complete the objective*
- *Dependency – list of the objectives (#) that must be started or completed before a particular objective can be completed*
- *Time – a calendar start and stop date for a particular item or garden element*
- *Cost – The amount of money required to complete an item or garden element*
- *Notes – a brief description of whether an item was completed or not completed or changed*

Here is an example of what your action plan could look like for Cultivating Support.

Managing Your Garden - Cultivating Support								
Goal #1 Statement								
#	Objectives	Task	Owner	Dependency	Time		Cost	Notes
					Start	Finish		
1.1	Objective Description							
1.2	Objective Description							
1.3	Objective Description							
Goal #2 Statement								
#	Objectives	Task	Owner	Dependency	Time		Cost	Notes
					Start	Finish		
2.1	Objective Description							
2.2	Objective Description							
2.3	Objective Description							

Other topics for action plans you can develop could include: Garden Layout, Construction, Soil & Amendments, Irrigation, Annual Maintenance, Tools & Storage, Crop Selections, Teacher & Staff Training, Volunteer Management, Planting & Harvesting, Outside Support, Funding, Student Activities & Exercises, Curriculum Integration, Pests & Disease Management.