



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

**Cooperative Extension**

Maricopa County

## **Considerations - Goals and Objectives**

One of the activities of a school garden committee is to develop a set of measurable goals and objectives. You may want to accomplish many things, but start with four or five basic goals that can be accomplished in the first year and one or two goals that could be accomplished in the second year. Remember, a goal is something that you want to achieve while an objective defines a strategy or an action that you will take to move you closer toward achieving the goal.

The goals will help inform the design of the garden as well as its ongoing support and maintenance. Written correctly, the goals and objectives should take you from interesting ideas to achievable and measurable outcomes.

Before going too far into the development of the goals, the committee chair should have a conversation with the principal to get his/her thoughts and wishes for the school garden. The principal's thoughts should be shared with the committee.

With that input to help get the members thinking about the garden, the committee chair should share a list of questions like those below, and then have a brief discussion about each one. Spend about three minutes per question. Have the questions drafted on a white board or project them on a screen. Ask someone to record the ideas or answers so everyone can see them.

### **Sample questions:**

- How will students engage in the garden – as part of a class or a garden club or both?
- Who will plan and maintain the garden?
- How will the garden be integrated into learning objectives and standards-based instruction? What grade levels will use the garden?
- What happens to the garden when school is not in session (holidays & summers)?
- What is the main purpose of the garden?
- Will the garden have special features such as a pond, art, weather station, scarecrow?

- Will there be theme beds: butterflies, salsa, herbs, flowers, other?

These questions should help the committee get some ideas about what school garden elements are important and also help inform the thinking when doing the site assessment.

After the discussion of the questions, it is time to start the development of some attainable goals. One way to start this process is to have your committee (hopefully more than one or two people) come together and do a simple exercise. Give each member some yellow sticky pads and ask them to write down different garden elements they would like to see in the garden based in part on the discussion of the questions. Write one idea per sticky. Give them 10 minutes to write down the ideas and then have them put them on a white board or wall. A few examples should help move the process along a bit faster.

Another way to approach this is to first do the site assessment and then develop a bubble diagram or just a graphic of what the garden layout would look like in three years. Take the garden elements that are in the diagram and do the exercise listed above to get to what elements would be put in place in year 1, year 2 and year 3.

**Example of garden elements are:**

Raised beds	Theme beds
In-ground garden area	Herb bed
Tool shed	Containers for
Compost bins	flowers and vegetables
Seed-starting area	Fruit and citrus trees
Food prep area	Vertical garden area
Sink	Outdoor classroom
Garden hose and hose bib	Pond

At this point in the planning you can choose to categorize the garden elements under headings such as equipment, requires construction, plants, soil, outdoor classroom space, etc. This may help to see if any elements are missing.

The next part of the exercise is to give each committee member small sticky colored dots. You want them to have two different colors, one color for year 1 and one color for year 2. Each participant should have the same number of dots and the total number must be 3-5 dots less than the number of garden elements (we want the participants to prioritize). Have the participants place their dots next to the elements they would like to

have included in year 1 (color #1) and year 2 (color #2). It helps to give them a ground rule: No selling or trading of dots. Give them 10 minutes to do this exercise. Tabulate the number of colored dots and this will give you a sense of priority for what elements are the most important. Draft your goals based on this input from the committee.

For each goal, identify measurable objectives to implement that will help achieve success. Look at the action plan link for ideas on how to measure the objectives.

Stay flexible and evaluate your goals each year. Be ready to change goals and priorities.

**Adding School Garden Elements in Future Years**

When you do an annual evaluation of your goals, it is sometimes faster if you develop a table that lists what elements you currently have, what is working, not working and what you want that you don't have.

Garden Elements	Is serves intended purpose	Needs upgraded or replaced or removed	Would like to have that is not in the garden
Example A			
Example B			

The next step in the planning process is developing a timeline, and once that is complete move the action plan. Again, remember to be flexible as so many things can change or a great element is wonderful but can't be funded in the year you want.