

# The Forks & Trowels of Creating Gardens with Youth

Information and Photos by Liz Stanley, Horticulture Program Coordinator,  
Knox-Lincoln & Waldo Counties





# Why Develop a Youth Garden?



# A Couple of Reasons

## Gardens....

- Increase a child's interest in the natural world
- Mesh with many learning styles
- Boost academic achievement in science, math, language arts, and other areas depending on how you use the garden
- Improve environmental awareness
- Promote good nutrition & exercise
- Make children aware of where their food comes from
- Foster a positive work ethic
- Increase self esteem and nurturing in boys *and* girls
- Strengthen team work
- Teach practical life-long skills
- Nurture an aesthetic
- Beautify communities
- Are FUN & Rewarding for kids *and* adults



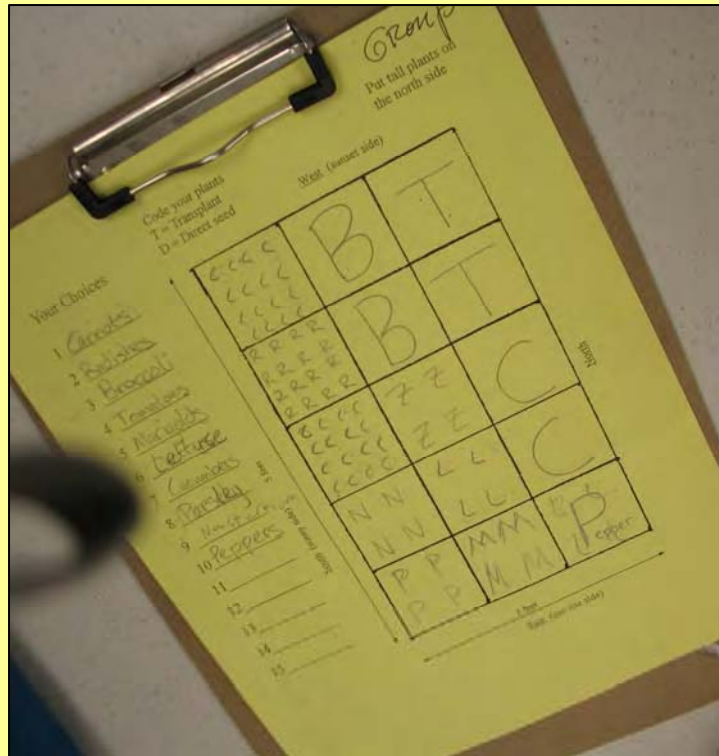
# What are the Goals for *Your* Garden?

It's OK to narrow down your goals  
and start modestly!





# Find a Leader



Who will....

- coordinate volunteers, materials, schedules, activities
- communicate to all
- be the contact for all
- write PR
- locate funding & in-kind donations
- troubleshoot
- inspire volunteers

Who is Your *Garden Coordinator* ?

Is this position paid?

Can this role be shared by volunteers?

# Find People for your Garden Steering Committee

## **Diverse Folks:**

- Teachers
- Administrators
- Parents
- Local gardeners
- Farmers
- Garden Club members
- Business people
- Clergy
- Master Gardener Volunteers
- 4-H Volunteers, Members
- Town Officials
- Teen mentors
- Boy & Girl Scouts

# Who will Host your Youth Garden Site?

- School
- Public Park
- Land Trust
- YMCA
- After School Program
- Food Cooperative
- Church
- Town Office
- Community Organization
- Extension office



# Questions to ask your Prospective Host



- Is the space available long term?  
(is it for sale?)
- Are there zoning restrictions?
- Is there Insurance for people using the site?

If they're enthusiastic.....

- Make a formal proposal with a visual plan and goals.
- Collaborate on clear by laws to guide your use of the property.

Don't forget to.....

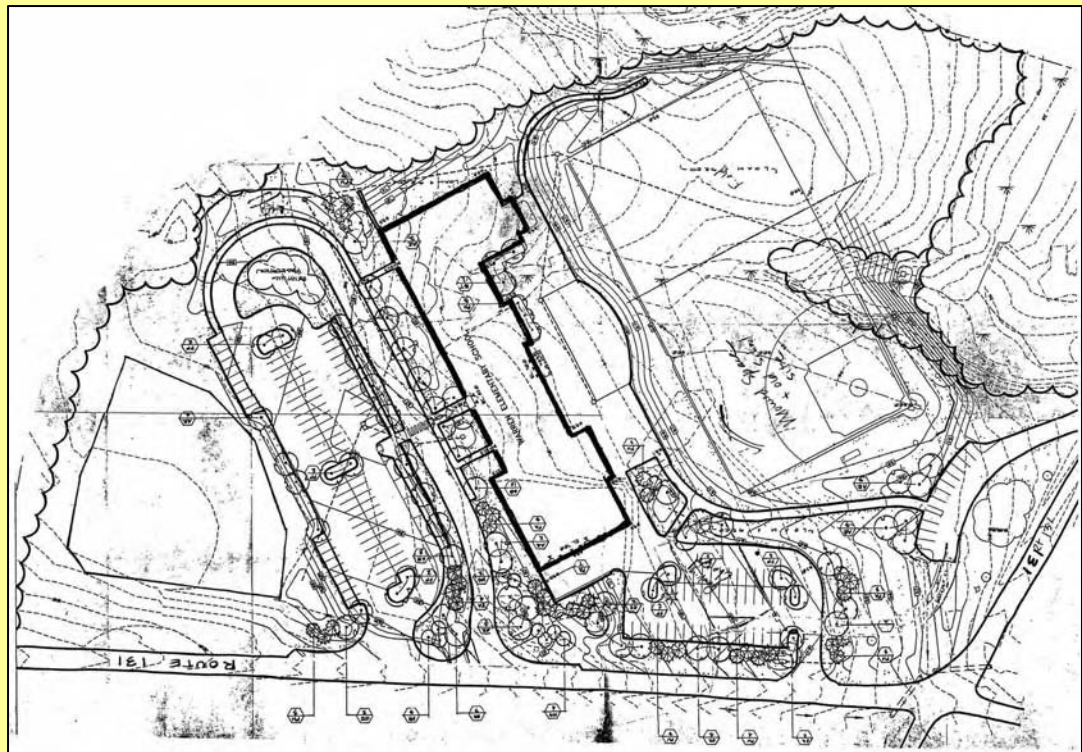
- Give credit to the property owners in PR and show your appreciation in other ways.



# Placement of the Garden

Help kids see with images from:

- Google Earth
- Town Office
- School District
- Architect
- Pilot photo
- Fly over!



# Site Considerations

## **Critical:**

- 6-8 Hours of Sun
- Access to water
- Good soil
- Level ground



## **Important:**

Place for tools  
Critter fencing  
Parking  
Road safety  
Convenience





# Garden Themes

Alphabet Garden

Animal Garden

Bean Teepee

Butterfly Garden

Container Garden

Cut Flower Garden

Dye Garden

Edible Flower  
Garden

Grow Light Garden

Halloween Garden

Herb Garden

Heritage Garden

Moon Garden

Native Plant Garden

Pizza Garden

Soup Kitchen Garden

Pressed Flower  
Garden

Purple Passion  
Garden

Rain Garden

Rainbow Garden

Salad Garden

Salsa Garden

Seed Savers Garden

Spud Garden

Sunflower House

Swirl or Maze  
Garden

Tea Garden

Three Sisters Garden

Windowsill Garden



Butterfly and Moth Adults & Larvae





# Designing Gardens with Kids

- Create a theme
- Research plants
- Visualize with
  - Drawings
  - Models
  - Dioramas



# Before you Start

## Survey your

- Soil
- Weeds
- Pests
- Other challenges





# Kill Sod & Weeds by Solarization



Clear Plastic (no holes)

Moist soil

Smooth surface

Sealed edges

4-12 wks to kill perennial  
weeds



# How will you Manage Pests?



Fencing?  
Repellents?  
Beneficial bugs?  
Hand picking?  
Pesticides?

Can kids learn from crop failure?



**Learn from your disasters.**







# Types of Gardens



# Raised Beds are probably *easiest*

## PROS:

- Smaller space to manage
- Easier to reach
- Warms earlier in spring
- Drains well
- More control over soil
- Easy to plan and do succession planting.
- More efficient watering
- Less fertilizer & soil amendments
- Crowds out weeds
- Eliminates compaction
- Root crops thrive



Jon Thurston at Troy Howard Middle School

# But.....



**They're:**

- Expensive to build
- Require tools
- Rot out in 5 years
- Dry out faster
- May become ugly over time.



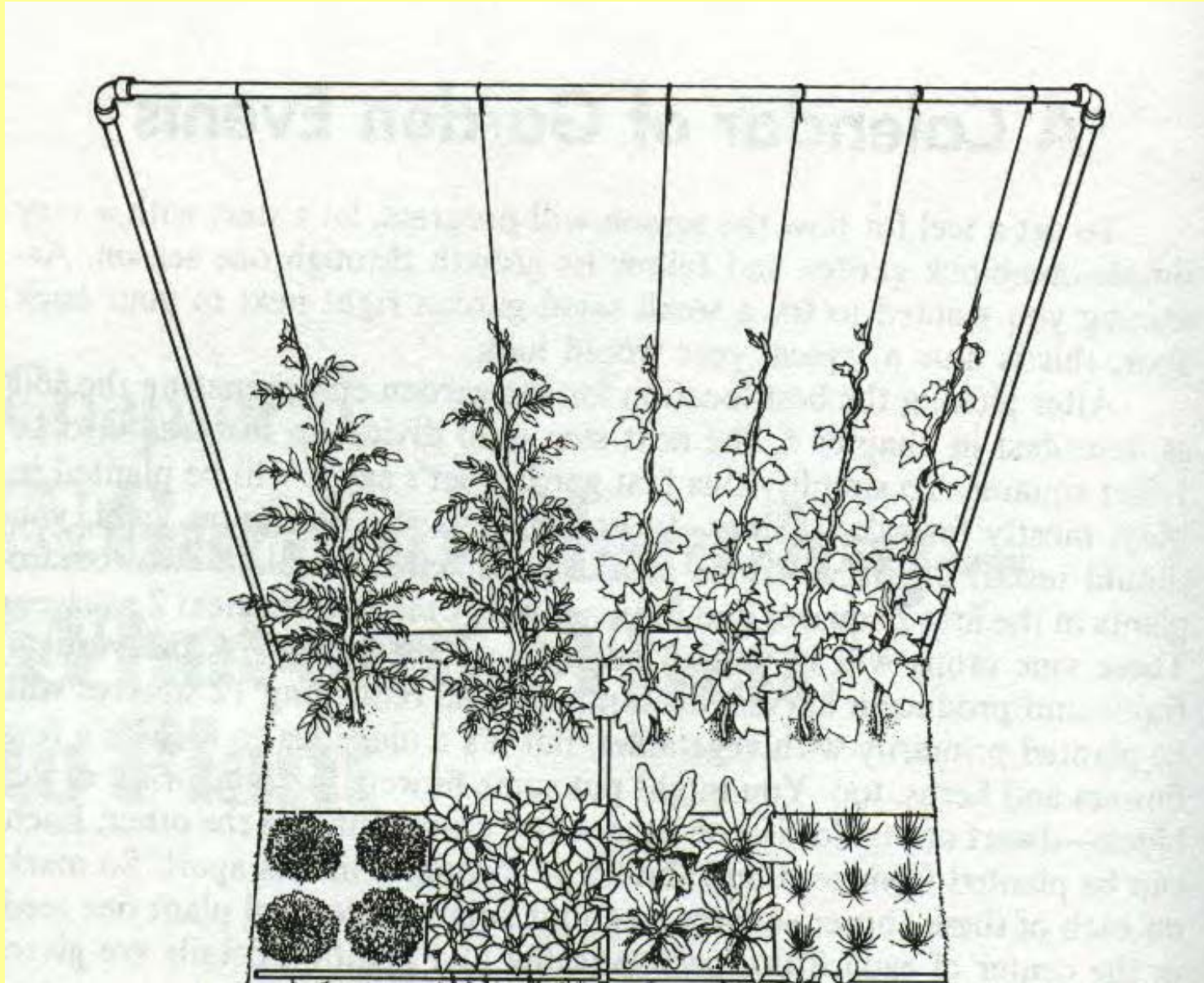
# Square Foot Gardening

A method by author Mel Bartholemew

- Raised beds
- Soilless mix  
(or Soil & Compost mix)
- Grid planting
- Succession planting
- Intensive planting
- Grow Vertically
- Easy to maintain
- Great for youth gardens



## Square Foot Gardening method with vertical trellis





# Container Gardens

Use a lighter soil or “soilless mix”



Washing machines, barrels, fish trays, terra cotta pots, garbage cans.....



# Traditional Row Crop Gardens



Use more space?...Grow more food?...Weed management?



# Indoor Gardens



# Season Extension Gardens

Unheated hoop houses and greenhouses offer gardening in shoulder seasons.





- When you do something noteworthy, document it and let others know about it!
- Celebrate your successes!

## Students grow salads from seeds at Warren Community School

WARREN — Thanks to community volunteers and the Warren Garden Club, the kindergarten, first grade and second grade students at the Warren Community School didn't wait for the snow to melt to begin their salad growing projects.

Inside of each class the students have planted salad greens under grow lights. They are watering the plants daily and keeping a log of the plants' progress.

The project will culminate with salad eating parties. "I am always impressed by the response of the students to this project," said Sasha Kutsy, community learning coordinator for the Warren Community School, in a press release.

The project also connects the students to their community by having a farmer or plant expert come into their classes to help with planting day. This year the students met Bill Pleucker of Hatchet Cove Farm, Jan McDonald of Barley Joe Greenhouses and Liz Stanley from the Cooperative Extension office.

**See more education news on page B3**



Liz Stanley from the Cooperative Extension office helps Zachary Cushman and Jaden Abruzese plant salad greens.

# Garden Tools & Equipment

Invest in quality tools sized for kids.

*Make clear rules for their use!*

Shovels, forks, rakes

Hoses, nozzles, watering cans

Harvest totes, Buckets

Camera

Journals

Seeds and seeding accessories

Mailbox & notepad for messages

Bench or picnic table with shade for table

Tarps for soil and compost piles, composting area

A place to store your stuff!





# Growing Plants for your Garden

## **Schedule to match your program and harvest time:**

- Indoor seed starting under grow lights

Repotting

Transplanting

- Planting purchased seedlings and sets
- Direct seeding



## **What to Grow based on harvest time**

When is your program active?

Do you parallel the school year?

Are you a summer program?

**Who will take care of the garden off season?**

### **Spring & Early Summer:**

Carrots (baby)

Greens (arugula, Asian greens, mustards, etc)

Herbs: Cilantro, Chives

Leaf and head lettuce

Peas

Radish

Spinach

### **Midsummer:**

Beans (bush)

Beets (and Beet Greens)

Bunching Onions (scallions)

Herbs: Basil, Dill, parsley, etc.

Kale (thinnings and young leaves)

Swiss chard

Summer squash

### **Late Summer & Fall:**

Beans (succession bush and pole beans)

Beets (and greens)

Broccoli

Brussels Sprouts

Cabbage

Carrots

Cauliflower

Corn

Eggplant

Garlic

Kale

Lettuce (likes cool weather)

Melons (use early varieties)

Onions

Peppers

Potatoes

Pumpkins

Spinach (cool weather)

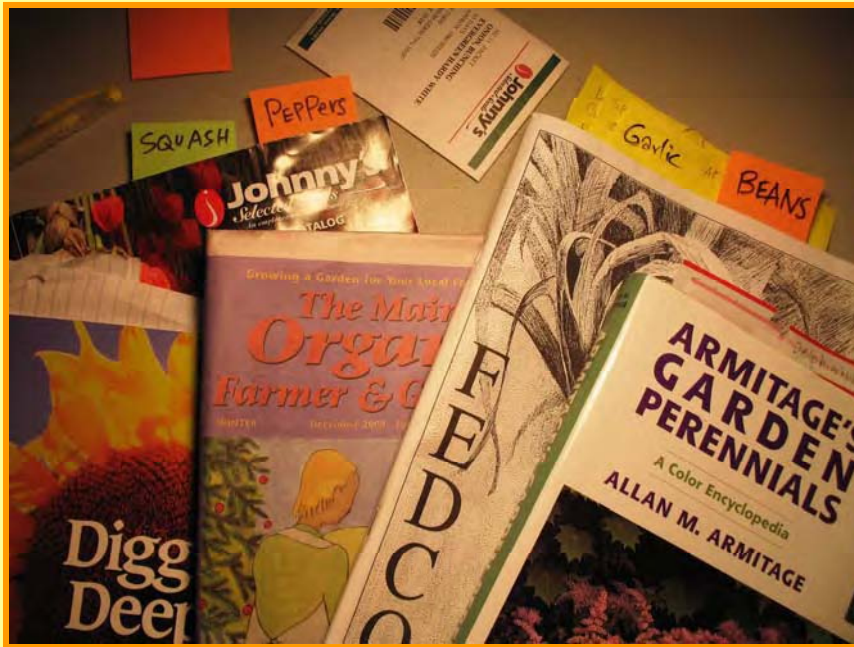
Squash (summer and winter)

Tomatoes

Turnips



# Where to Find Growing Information



Many catalogs have detailed cultural instructions.

- Books
- Seed catalogs & packets
- UMaine Extension
- Kids gardening curricula
- Experienced gardeners
- Adult Ed programs
- On line
- Trial and error!

# Planting was REALLY FUN.

## Now... How do we Maintain the Garden?

### Midsummer - When gardens live.....or DIE!

- Partner with summer youth programs (child care centers, YMCA programs, recreation department programs, etc.) who can help care for the garden.
- Create a maintenance schedule for children, parents & volunteers.
- Suppress weeds and grass by weeding when they first appear, mulching and watering plants not the whole garden.
- Water plants at the roots.
- Watch for pests & diseases.
- Keep in communication with others.





# Harvest Time!

- Pick on a regular basis to keep plants producing
- Have a place and routine for washing veggies
- Conduct a taste test
- Cook with simple recipes
- Host a harvest lunch
- Send food home with kids
- Display at a county fair
- Donate surplus food





Produce ready for a local soup kitchen



# Prepare for Next Year's Garden



- Save seeds
- Clean up the garden
- Turn the compost pile
- Test & prepare soil
- Use cover crops
- Protect soil
- Build a lasagna garden
- Put tools away
- Review what worked and what didn't

**Thank Supporters & Volunteers!**



# Celebrate your achievements!