SCHOOL GARDENS

I. Operating a School Garden

A. Approval

Schools opting to implement a school garden (vegetable, ornamental or rain) will, subsequent to approval by the Superintendent and in consultation with the District’s Maintenance and Operations Manager, designate a school garden Team Leader by the start of each school year. The principal may designate two Team Leaders for year-round coverage. The Team Leader and any on-site supervisors will obtain a Washington Food Handler’s Card prior to supervising any individuals in preparing food who do not hold a current food handler’s permit. Only persons with a Washington Food Handler’s Card may prepare (e.g., slice, peel, chop, wash) produce for tasting, for sending home with participants, and for donation.

All new garden sites or expansion of existing school gardens are subject to pre-approval by the principal and the Maintenance Director or designee, who must receive garden plans showing garden dimensions and placement of any structures within or adjacent to the garden.

Applications for new gardens will be requested by using a “Volunteer or Community Support Request Form” obtained from the Maintenance and Operations office. Applications will include a map showing site location and size.

Gardens will be categorized as one of three levels:

1. Level I- a garden consisting of two or less planter boxes, no more than 100 square feet total; or
2. Level II- more than two planter boxes, or more than 100 square feet total; or
3. Level III- Greenhouses (may be in conjunction with planter boxes or cultivated area).

Once a school garden receives pre-approval from the Maintenance and Operations Manager, the district will assist in the facilitation of gardens, but will not provide financial assistance to develop, maintain, or remove such gardens. Specific examples of such costs are referenced in this regulation but should not be considered an exhaustive list of costs for which those garden sponsor/partner organizations/volunteers will be responsible.

B. Preparation

A school garden may incorporate in-ground planting, planted depressions or holes (for a rain garden), raised bed planting, and/or hydroponics. Prior to establishment of a school garden, the soil where the garden will be placed will be tested for biological, chemical and physical hazards, including lead and other industrial contaminants at the expense of the sponsoring/partnering organizations. For raised beds, use of commercial soil meant for food production is recommended when practicable. Regardless of whether commercial soil will
be used, however, soil tests must take place in the area on which the raised bed(s) will be placed.

A school garden should be placed uphill from contamination sources (e.g., roads, parking lots) or on level ground, and away from streets and areas where wild domestic animals have easy access to the garden. Garden beds and boundaries should be made from redwood, cedar or plastic wood. Treated lumber may be used as long as it was created after 2005. Use of railroad ties or tires is prohibited. Prior to digging at school sites, an 811 utility locate must be completed at the sole expense of sponsoring/partnering organizations.

All deliveries of materials that will require piling (e.g., soil, compost) must be pre-approved by the Maintenance and Operations department. All piles must be located at least 10 feet from buildings and must be removed as soon as possible.

C. Maintenance, weeding, composting, irrigation, and drainage
Once the garden area has been prepared, the Team Leader will notify the Maintenance Manager, Supervisor, Warehouse Foreman and Sustainability Manager of his/her contact information. The Team Leader(s) is/are responsible for arranging year-round monthly garden maintenance and additional maintenance prior to school breaks, holidays and the end of the school year by garden sponsoring/partnering organizations

The school will create a summer plan for the garden that addresses irrigation, harvest and weeding. If no one is available to maintain the garden over the summer break, the school will refrain from planting. Gardens that are not maintained over Summer Break will be given additional attention to include discussion for removal of the garden by district grounds staff. Costs related to returning the garden area to its original condition prior to creation of the garden will be at the sole expense of the sponsoring/partnering organizations. Any action in this regard requires the prior approval of the Maintenance Department and school principal.

When a school garden is used to educate students about agricultural practices, students will be afforded the opportunity to learn about both conventional, traditional and organic practices. Mesh cloth may be used to control weeds. Organic materials such as cardboard may be used as a weed barrier as long they are covered by several inches of compost or mulch to keep the materials in place and to avoid creating a fire hazard.

Compost from school cafeteria waste may not be used in a food-growing school garden. Compost from other school landscaping may not be applied to food-growing beds. Additionally, farm manure and pet waste will not be added to compost bins or school gardens. Before summer break, all composting systems onsite must be harvested, secured, and free of any food scraps or other material that may attract rodents.

The District may require that a water fee is assessed for school gardens. The sponsoring/partnering organization is responsible for payment of water fees and maintenance of the school garden irrigation system in gardens that they sponsor. The school
or sponsoring/partnering organization is also responsible for winterizing all water sources and systems in the school garden area.

If well water is used, it should be checked annually to make sure it meets Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards. Drainage should prevent little, if any, standing water to avoid creating a habitat for mosquitoes.

D. **Structures and other design features**

Tool sheds and greenhouses, regardless of size or materials, must be pre-approved by the Maintenance and Operations department prior to purchase. These structures are not permitted on school lawns or next to a building or any area that will provide roof or school site access. Construction of some types of structures may require local building permits and/or union approval. Team Leader will accomplish this by filling out a “Volunteer or Community Support Request Form”.

All murals require prior approval of the principal and the Maintenance and Operations department. Solar fountains may be installed in school garden areas as long as they do not compromise underground irrigation. All fencing requires prior approval by the Maintenance and Operations department.

E. **Tools**

All school garden tools, including harvesting tools, will be cleaned regularly with hot water and soap, then dried. All harvesting tools, including scissors, pruners, bowls or tubs should be food-grade.

F. **Plant/seed selection**

The following are prohibited in all types of school gardens:

a. Plants with spines, thorns, or poisonous berries, flowers or leaves;
b. Plants considered invasive in Western Washington, including English ivy and running varieties of bamboo; and
c. Marijuana/cannabis, opium poppies and all varieties of wild or psilocybin mushrooms.

Planting of fruit trees (dwarf and semi-dwarf are recommended) as a complement to the school garden must be pre-approved by the Maintenance and Operations department. The Team Leader is responsible for calling 811 prior to digging (costs for any necessary surveying are to be borne by garden sponsoring/partnering organizations) and for keeping the ground free of fallen fruit.

G. **Pest management and animal control**

Under no circumstances will synthetic pesticides or herbicides (including weed-killer) be used in the school garden, with the exception of mosquito repellant. The sponsoring/partnering organization will be responsible for costs of eradication of pests associated with the garden such as rodents and bees if those pests pose a hazard to the
school site. All such actions will comply with the district’s Integrated Pest Management (IPM) process.

Birds should not be fed near school gardens, nor should wild bird feed be left near school gardens. Stakes should be covered with plastic or metal cones to keep birds from resting and defecating in or near the garden. Birdhouses located in the vicinity of the garden, but not hanging in the garden or over it, are permissible.

H. Garden Safety
All participants in gardening activities will be provided direction and supervision by the Team Leader and will be directed in the appropriate placement of sharp tools, rakes, and hoses so as to minimize risk of injury or tripping hazards. Before a high school student can operate power tools (e.g., cultivators, tillers, trimmers/edgers, chainsaws) in the school garden, a parental consent form must be signed and safety training documented. Both forms must be maintained by the Team Leader. Use of shovels exceeding 40 inches in length is also prohibited.

A first aid kit, hand washing station, hand washing supplies, disposable gloves and drinking water will be easily available to school garden participants during gardening activities.

Students and volunteers may consume garden produce on-site or take produce home if they or their parents/guardians have provided a signed District-authorized consent and assumption of risk form to the school. Garden produce must be washed with potable water prior to consumption on-site.

I. Harvesting
School garden produce should be harvested regularly. Rotting fruit and vegetables should be removed in order to limit attracting animals.

All harvesting tools such as knives and scissors will be cleaned with soap and potable water immediately before harvesting.

All persons involved with harvesting must wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water prior to participating. Anyone with open cuts, sores or wounds on their extremities will not be permitted to harvest.

Plastic garbage bags, trash cans, and any containers that originally held chemicals such as pesticides will not be used for harvesting. Only clean, food-grade containers will be used.

J. Tasting, Preparation and Taking Produce Home
a. Students, staff and volunteers will only be permitted to taste and take home school garden produce after they or their parent/guardian signs the District’s assumption of risk form. Only produce that has been washed with potable water may be tasted.

b. Students who prepare food to take home will be supervised by a Team Leader or volunteer who holds a current Washington Food Handler’s permit. Student preparation
of produce is limited to washing, sectioning and peeling by hand. Students may not use knives or other blades or machines with blades to prepare food.

C. Food preparation/cooking demonstrations will take place outside of the classroom and be performed by contractors (e.g., Washington State University employees), inside or outside the classroom by adult volunteers with a Washington Food Handler’s permit, or occur as part of a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program in a food services setting ordinarily used for food preparation as part of other District food service and CTE programs. Adult volunteers may not cook produce inside the classroom, but may provide demonstrations of no-cook preparations such as pickling, preparation of salsa, salads, dips, dressings, etc.

d. Students under ten and children under the age of ten will not be permitted to prepare or cook foods for donation, or to be present in the area where such foods are being prepared or cooked.

e. Bruised, moldy, damaged and overripe produce should not be consumed. Produce should not be washed prior to refrigeration.

K. Donations

School garden produce may be donated to local charitable organizations (non-profit) subject to the following requirements to be included in the District’s memorandum of understanding with the receiving organization:

a. Only whole fruits and vegetables with an intact peel/outer skin will be donated. Bruised, moldy, damaged and overripe produce will not donated.

b. Produce should not be washed prior to refrigeration.

c. Food preparation will take place either outside of the classroom by contractors (e.g., Washington State University employees) or by adult volunteers with a Washington Food Handler’s permit or occur as part of a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program in a food services setting ordinarily used for food preparation as part of other District food service and CTE programs.

d. Students under the age of ten and children under the age of ten will not be permitted to prepare or cook foods for donation or to be present in the area where foods are being prepared or cooked.

e. Records documenting the source, quantity, type and receiving date of produce donated will be kept by the district and receiving organization for a minimum of thirty (30) calendar days.

f. The receiving organization will be responsible for:
   - Moving/loading and transport of the garden produce from school property (students and volunteers will not be permitted to ride on the transport); and
   - Assuming all liability for the produce upon receipt.

L. Other garden-related activities

Keeping of bees, chickens, turkeys or ducks is not permitted due to these activities’ potential to trigger allergies and transmit salmonella bacteria.
II. Participants

A. All students and volunteers will provide the district’s assumption of risk agreements signed by their parent/guardian (or the volunteer) in order to participate in the school garden program.

B. All school garden participants should:
   a. Wash hands with soap and potable water before and after working in the school garden.
   b. Wear gloves when handling compost.
   c. Wear dust masks when handling certain gardening materials such as lime and fertilizers.
   d. Wear closed-toe shoes when working in the garden to prevent cuts, stings and other injuries.
   e. Provide notice of all known food and insect allergies prior to participating in the school garden.

C. Team leaders will:
   a. Ensure that all students and volunteers have provided signed hold harmless agreements prior to participation in the school garden.
   b. Ensure that students with individual health emergency care plans and/or Section 504 plans that include the carrying of epinephrine auto-injectors to treat a diagnosed life-threatening allergy are carrying the devices on their person during school garden activities. If such a student develops symptoms of anaphylaxis and self-administers, notify the school nurse immediately.
   c. **Immediately call the school nurse** if a student with a diagnosed life-threatening allergy (but whose health emergency care plan or Section 504 plan does not address self-administration of epinephrine) develops symptoms of anaphylaxis. Any trained staff member may administer the epinephrine to the student.
   d. **Call 911** if any student not previously diagnosed with a life-threatening allergy develops symptoms of anaphylaxis.
   e. Instruct students and volunteers as to proper planting/weeding/watering technique and use of garden tools and appropriate safety precautions.
   f. Instruct students and volunteers as to which parts of school garden plants can be eaten and which cannot (e.g., rhubarb, tomatoes).
   g. Assign garden tasks in an age-appropriate manner.

D. Volunteers will:
   a. Undergo the District’s volunteer approval process and complete all required district training prior to working in the garden.
   b. Comply with all District rules and requirements regarding volunteer screening, conduct, mandatory reporting and boundaries regarding students.
c. At their own expense, obtain a state Food Handler’s Permit if they will be preparing
garden produce for tasting, sending home, donation or as part of cooking
demonstrations for students.

d. Immediately notify the Team Leader or call 911 if a student with a diagnosed life-
threatening allergy (but whose health emergency care plan or Section 504 plan does not
address self-administration of epinephrine) develops symptoms of anaphylaxis.
Any trained staff member may administer the epinephrine to the student.

e. Immediately notify the Team Leader or call 911 if any student not previously
diagnosed with a life-threatening allergy develops symptoms of anaphylaxis.

Adoption Date: 1/25/18