

School Garden - Summer Maintenance Guide 2014



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Thanks for helping the school garden continue to grow and thrive in the summer – without your help, the hard work of our students could go neglected. As a summer garden helper we ask that you:

- ✓ Check to see the water is working correctly
- ✓ Weed
- ✓ Thin
- ✓ Check for pests. Research and use organic methods to remove pests.
- ✓ Trellis plants when needed

This guide modeled after a similar document produced by Common Threads Farm. Thank You.

Garden Care Schedule

Week By Week Schedule

Week	Name	Child(ren)	e-mail	phone
June 15-21				
June 22-28				
June 29-July 5				
July 6-12				
July 13-19				
July 20-26				
July 27-Aug 2				
Aug 3-9				
Aug10 – 16				
Aug 17-23				
Aug 24-30				

Need Help?

We encourage you to use this list to get in touch with your fellow garden helpers if you want to trade time, seek help, or share the joys of the garden together. If you have additional questions or concerns contact Beth Thiel at 509-386-2037 or 525-0969 or bthiel@wwps.org.

Garden Activity Schedule

Garden activities will be occurring with Campfire and City Parks and Recreation, summer program participants at Green Park, Edison and Sharpstein, following this general schedule:

Green Park – Mondays 9:30am – 11:00am

Edison – Fridays 9:30am – 11:30am

Sharpstein – Thursdays 9:30-11:45am

* Schedule includes time necessary to set up and take down activities.

We ask that you allow these classes to pick and prepare available produce in these three gardens. When there is extra produce, the summer garden coordinator will email the group to notify about type and amount of available produce.

Watering the Garden

Gardens have automatic watering systems, but they can malfunction. The system is set to water early in the morning every day.

Please check to see that the system is working by checking the soil around water emitters to see if the soil is moist. The amount of watering time may need to be increased when weather is hot (over 90°) for several days. If you have concerns about the system or the amount of time it is watering, please contact Beth Thiel at 525-0969 or bthiel@gmail.com

Signs your plants need more water: wilted, yellowed or dried leaves are a sign that your plants need more water. Lack of water lowers a plant's resistance, so bug infestations or early bolting can be indicators that your plant is under water stress.

This guide along with the instructions for the irrigation timer will be kept with the garden equipment in a binder. The binder also contains blank sheets to log any observations about water, pests, plants etc.



Weeding the Garden

Our goal here is not to be on the cover of Gardner’s Magazine, but to make sure that the weeds in our garden are not out-competing our crops. Refer to the map of what is planted at the garden you are tending. Understand what those plants look like and remove all other plants.

How often should I weed? Plan to spend 15 minutes a day weeding (or 1 hour total during the week). If each garden helper commits to consistent weeding, we’ll be able to keep on top of the weeds. Please remove the entire weed including roots. Gloves and a trowel are helpful for this tough work.

Where do I put weeds? Weeds at Green Park and Prospect Point should be composted. If the weeds have not gone to seed yet, put them on the compost pile. If they have gone to seed, remove the seed heads and throw in the dumpster, or throw then entire plant in the dumpster. Weeds pulled at Edison and Sharpstein can be thrown in the dumpster. (We hope to start composting at every school).

Guide to Common Weeds



Thistle
Green Park



Lambs Quarter
all schools



False Clover
all schools



spotted spurge
all schools



Common mallow
all schools



prostrate knotweed
all schools



Goat head weed
Prospect Point



large leaf plantain
Sharpstein



Kochia
Edison,



Dandelion
all schools



Crab grass
Green Park



Virginia creeper vine
Green Park

Plant Care

Thinning – Carrots, beets, salad greens may need to be “thinned”. When there are many seedlings coming up, some will need to be pulled out to make room for the others to grow. Thinning may need to happen multiple times as the plants grow. Do an initial thinning when the plants are 1-2” tall, thinning so that one or two fingers fit comfortably between each plant. When the plants grow a little larger and start to look crowded, do a second thinning leaving about 2” between carrots, 4” between beets, spinach and chard.

Suckering – Tomatoes are a vine and their impulse is to spread. We want to encourage our plants to grow UP and FRUIT rather than putting energy into more leaves. As the plants grow, remove the “suckers” or side shoots from the plants, these are the little shoots that emerge in the V between the main stem and the leaf branches. They are best pinched off when small – use garden clippers or scissors if they are more than a few inches to ensure a clean cut.



Hilling Potatoes – Hilling potatoes adds loose soil around the plant, in which more tubers can easily grow, resulting in a bigger harvest. It also covers existing tubers, keeping them from turning green in the sun. Continue hilling potatoes weekly until midsummer. With each hilling, cover the base of the vines with an inch or two of new soil. Get the soil from around the plants or from the pathways.

Plants that have Bolted – “Bolting” is when a plant goes to flower near the end of its life cycle. Salad greens shoot up from the center and put flowers at the top. Once a plant bolts it is no longer ideal for eating as the amount of formic acid in the plant increases and it takes on a bitter taste. The leaves also become rough. In some plants, like basil, you should regularly pinch off the flowering heads before they flower, encouraging the plant to continue leaf production. For most plants though, trimming off the flowering head will make little difference – they will continue to bolt. Seed saving is an activity at some schools, so you can leave the plants in the garden. Often these seeds overwinter and grow new greens in the spring, giving early garden participants something to taste. The flowering heads of kale, broccoli and radish can make a delicious and colorful edition to salads.



Harvesting:

An exciting new project provides garden and cooking activities for Campfire and City Parks and Recreation summer program participants at Green Park, Edison and Sharpstein Elementary Schools. (see garden activity schedule on page 3) Not only will these participants be taking part in some garden maintenance activities, they will also be taking part in cooking of garden vegetables that they harvest. Please don't harvest at these three schools this summer, unless contacted by the summer garden coordinator.

Prospect Point Elementary can harvest this summer. Here are some harvesting guidelines.

- ✓ 2-handed harvesting keeps plants intact and rooted. Use one hand to hold the plant and the other to pull off your harvest.
- ✓ Be sure to leave some produce for students to use in the fall.

Harvesting Salad Crops:

If there are still salad crops available, harvest them now before the heat makes them bolt. Harvest as much as you like, but once it has bolted, allow flower heads to remain for seed lessons in the fall. Harvest leaves from the entire plant, leaving about 2" above the base for re-growth.

Harvesting Fruit Crops:

Harvesting tomatoes before they fall to the ground or cucumbers before they get too large to enjoy, is important to model valuable production rather than waste.

Cucumbers: Use a knife to cut the stem just above the mature cucumber.

Tomatoes and Peppers: Harvest once they've turned their true color (there are some green zebra tomatoes, which will be green when mature). Break fruit off using the 2 handed method to avoid pulling on the whole plant.

Peas/beans/corn – Beans are ready to harvest when they are at least 5" long. Beans can also be used as dried beans when the students return to school so leave some for class activities. The corn should be used in the fall when it is dried, unless any classes planted sweet corn, in which case, harvest and enjoy. Contact Beth Thiel or Heidi Chapin if you have questions about harvesting.

Harvesting Root Crops:

Potatoes: Potatoes should be left for classes to harvest and cook in the fall

Radishes – If left too long, these plants will bolt and the radish will become fibrous. If they are planted in your garden, eat them while you can.

Beets/carrots – pulling beets and carrots should serve a dual purpose, harvesting and thinning. Pull out closely spaced plants so that the remaining ones have more space to grow. Once they have reached ideal spacing, let them grow. If space allows, new carrots and beet seeds can be sown in July/August for continued harvesting in the later fall.

Pests in the Garden:

Although there haven't been many insect pests in the gardens, it is worth keeping an eye out for them to remove them as early as possible.

Squash bugs: Squash bugs can be the most destructive insect pest of winter squash and pumpkins. Both nymphs and adults primarily feed by sucking sap from plants causing them to wither and die. Eggs can be detected around mid June into July. Attention should be given to the eggs which are easily detected and can be crushed or removed when detected. Egg surveys should be done at least once a week during June when egg laying is likely to begin. If bugs are found you can pick them off and toss them in a container of soapy water. Or you can spray the insects with a solution of soap spray (2 Tbs. liquid soap to 1 quart of water).



Squash bug eggs on underside of leaf

two squash bugs on a winter squash

Colorado potato beetle: Handpicking, especially in small gardens, can be effective. Drop adults and larvae in a pail filled with soapy water. Also remove or crush the yellowish orange eggs on the underside of leaves. New adult beetles can fly into gardens so be sure to check your potatoes regularly.



Adult and larval stage potato beetle

Potato beetle eggs on the underside of leaf

Ideas for fun in the garden:

- Have a picnic in the garden. Invite friends and family to join you!
- Bring a magnifying glass to observe flowers, insects or worms up close.
- Bring art supplies to draw and color the flowers and plants.
- Record your discoveries in the garden journal: bugs and wildlife, things that you tasted/smelled/touched, things you're curious about.
- Take photos to share! Post them on the Walla Walla Farm to School and School Garden facebook page.



School Specific Instructions School: _____

Water Access	
Composting System	
Garden Journal	
Equipment	
Crops to save for student use	
Crops to sow	
Weeds/Pests of Interest	
Other important Notes	