



# tip sheet: **Top 10 School Garden Tools**

## overview

There are many tools to help accomplish tasks in the garden. A smart inventory of tools is essential to a successful garden and gardening program. Consider supplying your shed with a limited set of quality child-scaled tools and plan to share in pairs or groups to stretch your budget. For larger behind-the-scenes maintenance projects that occur less frequently, develop a stock of adult-scaled tools as well.

## objectives

### *Participants will learn:*

- to familiarize the reader with helpful garden tools in a school garden setting.
- to differentiate tools as useful for adult and children's gardening use, as well as quantities of each needed for good school garden care and programming.

## suggestions

### *Suggested School Garden Tool Kit:*

- 1. Trowels** – Trowels, or hand-held shovels, are useful for small scale digging – investigating soil and preparing holes for transplanting seedlings. Consider purchasing enough to supply half the class and assign students to work in pairs. We recommend cultivators with metal blades and rubberized handle.
- 2. Cultivators** – Cultivators, or hand-held rakes, are useful for loosening soil prior to sowing seeds, and are also helpful when trying to get a purchase on stubborn weeds. If budget is limited, purchase a few and create station centers that students rotate through, incorporating this tool at one of the stations. We recommend cultivators with metal tines and rubberized handle.
- 3. Knee Pads** – Knee pads, or foam mats, are useful when gardening in raised garden beds or in-ground garden beds. They cushion gardeners' knees and help keep gardeners clean and dry. We like the plastic sealed foam as they are easy to clean with a rag.
- 4. Watering Cans** – Child-scaled watering cans are an extremely useful tool. Watering cans allow students to help with this garden chore while limiting the likelihood of tender seedlings being doused or classmates sprayed from an out of control hose. We prefer ½ gallon and 1 gallon plastic watering cans with removable roses (sprinkler heads) in order to clean out debris.

## **suggestions (continued)**

### ***Suggested School Garden Tool Kit (continued):***

**5. Planting Frames** – Planting frames are used to aid in the spacing of seeds and seedlings. A grid of cells within a 12" or 18" frame can be positioned in a garden bed and helps to organize the efficient planting of seeds or seedlings. For a 12" square frame, a 36# of cells in an arrangement of 6 rows and 6 columns is appropriate for radish and carrot seeds while a 4# of cells in an arrangement of 2 rows and 2 columns is appropriate for lettuce or bok choy seedlings. Our frames are constructed from wood and nylon string.

**6. Buckets** – Galvanized buckets are a utilitarian garden tool that can be used in so many capacities. Whether to collect weeds, harvests, transport soil, or tools, you can't have enough buckets around. We avoid plastic and prefer the galvanized buckets in the 1.5-2 gallon volume.

**7. Water tubs / Utility Tubs** – Similar to small buckets, 10 gallon tubs can be used to collect many buckets of weeds or harvests. Filled with water, tubs can be used as a reservoir for filling up watering cans or used as a rinse station for freshly harvested produce. We recommend hard plastic tubs with two handles for transporting.

**8. Shovels and Spading Forks** – Child-scaled or adult-scaled shovels and spading forks are not necessary in most school garden situations however they are useful during large scale maintenance projects or for importing large volumes of planting medium. We recommend stocking few adult-scaled shovels and spading forks with wood handles and metal blades/tines for these occasions, and borrowing when necessary for large projects.

**9. Wagons or Wheelbarrows** – Most school gardens can be traversed quickly and so wheelbarrow and wagons are not necessary very often. Keeping one wheelbarrow or wagon in the shed though will prove useful and relieve the back of a summer maintainer without the benefit of dozens of eager students to help.

**10. Hoses and Sprinklers** – Hoses and sprinklers are useful, particularly in the behind-the-scenes maintenance effort of school gardens. If garden visits are not frequent, you may find it easier to install an automatic irrigation system and will need the sprinkler head and hose to reach all corners of the garden.