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The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

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News from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

School Gardens Offer Myriad Benefits, Take Planning

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COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Planting seeds: that's what you can do with a school garden, not only in the ground, but in the minds of young people.

"Using the environment as a context for learning is an incredible tool," said Susan Hogan, program assistant for Ohio State University Extension's 4-H Youth Development program.

"Gardening at school sites addresses many of the [science academic content standards](#) and also increases social and interpersonal skills," Hogan said. "Sometimes, children who have learning difficulties or who are struggling do better when they're learning outdoors."

Hogan, who has experience working in environmental education, joined OSU Extension in December. As spring approached, she began getting more inquiries from area schools for advice on starting a school garden.

"One of the great things about Extension is that we can pool a lot of resources from Extension and from other organizations," Hogan said.

Instead of just continuing to respond to inquiries as they came in, she decided to be proactive and put together a one-day conference, "Growing a School Garden 101," which will be held 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on May 13, at Ohio State's Nationwide and Ohio Farm Bureau 4-H Center, 2201 Fred Taylor Drive. OSU Extension is the outreach arm of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences.

The workshop is designed for school and afterschool program personnel, including administrators, principals, educators, food service personnel and custodians, as well as community partners, church personnel and interested parents.

Photo courtesy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Other benefits of school gardens, Hogan said, include:

- Incorporates physical activity into the school day.
- Increases awareness of the environment and environmental issues.
- Encourages children to eat fresh produce. "You're more likely to eat it if you've helped grow it," Hogan said.

Registration, due by April 26, is \$35 and includes lunch. The workshop is limited to 50 participants. To register, send a check payable to OSU Extension to OSU Extension, Franklin County, 2105 S. Hamilton Road, Suite 100, Columbus, OH 43232-4145, or contact Hogan at hogan.239@osu.edu for a registration form or more information. If you have questions, call Hogan at 614-866-6900, ext. 214.

The morning agenda includes:

- Stakeholders and Funders: Cultivating Partnerships, by Bill Dawson, Franklin Park Conservatory.
- How Does Your Garden Grow: Garden Selection, Design and Other Logistics, Tress Augustine and Peggy Murphy, OSU Extension Master Gardener volunteers.
- From Seed to Sprout: Engaging Youth, James Reding, Granville Exempted Village School District.
- Reaping the Benefits: From the Garden to the Cafeteria and Beyond, Charles Dilbone, Granville Exempted Village School District.
- Growing Good Habits: Garden-Related Health and Fitness, Marilyn Rabe, OSU Extension, family and consumer sciences and Franklin County Extension office director.
- A Bountiful Harvest: Panel Presentation Q&A.
- Everything's Coming Up Clovers: Making the 4-H and Extension Connection, Beth Boomershine, OSU Extension, 4-H Youth Development.
- Container Gardening, Job Ebenezer, Technology for the Poor, Westerville.

In the afternoon, participants will tour Chadwick Arboretum on the Ohio State campus and participate in a container gardening activity with volunteer Julia Hays. Later they will visit the school/community garden on Highland Avenue in Columbus where volunteers, students and teachers will share their experiences. Participants will need their own vehicles to get to the Highland Avenue site, Hogan said.

"The school garden is an excellent tool to teach children and teens about empowerment, community responsibility, and how to connect positively with neighbors."

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