



Seed to Salad: Gear Up for Gardening Assembly

If your Salad Garden Program takes place in a school setting or any place with a smaller group within a larger group (an after school program or camp), consider including a Gear Up For Gardening Assembly as part of your program.

Preparation

Even if only a few classrooms or an after school club is working on the Seed to Salad Project, it will be visible to the whole school, program, or camp. An assembly is a great way to get everyone excited about what's ahead and share some fun and educational aspects of gardening!

- Plan your assembly for before the growing season. In Upstate NY we aim for around the first day of spring in mid-March.
- The date of the assembly is something you'll want to discuss with the principal if you're working in a school setting.
- You want to make sure that the date doesn't conflict with testing or field trips and that the gym or cafeteria is available.
- The sooner a date is chosen, the sooner it can be communicated with teachers. They'll be giving up instruction time for their class to attend so it's best to keep them informed.
- Once the date is on the calendar, turn the planning over to the youth, and serve as their "coach."

Questions to Explore

1. Most youth will have never planned an assembly for their school or group before so ask them to share experiences from other assemblies they've attended. What were the best parts? What wasn't fun about them?
2. When it comes to gardening and *Seed to Salad* what do they think their peers will be most interested in learning about? What kinds of activities related to those topics would be fun?
3. Who can you get involved to help? Is there a teacher, parent, or someone they know that could lead a particular activity? Is there a community group that does interesting outreach on a topic that might be able to come?
4. What role do the planners want to have at the assembly? Do they want to attend like their peers or would they like a more active role, like leading activities?
5. How are you going to prepare for the assembly? Who will prep materials, make contact with volunteers, and make sure the principal has communicated the assembly with teachers?

Planning your own Assembly

Here is a week by week guide, based on our experience.

Week 1:

- Get to know each other & provide overview of the *Seed to Salad* program.
- Present the idea of an assembly to administrators.
- Brainstorm successful qualities of past school assemblies, as well as what could be improved.

Week 2:

- Revisit those positive and “to be improved” qualities and define what you want to include in the assembly.
- Brainstorm gardening topics you think other students might be interested in.
- Share ideas with the principal who will help determine a date for the assembly.

Week 3:

- Based on Week 2’s work, start brainstorming activities that you might include in the assembly.
- How will you continue your work? For example, a group may decide to meet during recess twice a week to work on this idea.
- The group holds its first meeting and designates roles of writer, director, prop master, and actors and begins recruiting additional people to help fill the roles.

Week 4:

- Narrow down your list of activities and define what each activity will entail.
- Generate a list of parents and community groups to ask for assistance.
- Start contacting community groups.
- Encourage youth to ask parents for assistance.
- If you plan a similar event, such as the play that we performed, complete a rough draft, and then final draft, at this time.
- Students begin rehearsing their parts.

Week 5:

- Confirm activities for the assembly.
- Report back on parent and community group involvement; define next steps.
- Create a supply list for each activity.
- Gather necessary supplies.
- Play cast can continue rehearsing; determine what props and costumes are needed.

Week 6:

- Students help prepare supplies for the assembly.
- Students make posters to hang in school corridors advertising the assembly.
- Play cast makes props and costumes.
- The cast holds their dress rehearsal.

A Case Study for Inspiration: The Gear Up for Gardening Assembly at Northeast Elementary School, Ithaca, NY

In early February at Northeast Elementary School, youth began meeting once a week for 30 minutes before school to plan a gardening assembly for the entire school. The assembly was held about six weeks later in mid-March.

Highlights

- The group planned the assembly.
- A team of 5th graders decided to perform a short play as part of the assembly.
- This group began meeting twice weekly during recess to write, rehearse, and make costumes for the play to be included in the assembly.

The Assembly

- Took place in the school gym over two and a half hours.
- Grade levels were grouped (Pre-k, K, & 1st, 2nd & 3rd, and 4th & 5th) and rotated to the gym for 40 minutes, so the same assembly was repeated three times.
- Began with the 15-minute play planned by the 5th graders followed by free choice of the activities.
- Parent volunteers staffed activity stations. The Tompkins County Cooperative Extension Master Composter program sent volunteers to set up a soil and compost station.

Assembly Activities

A Veggie Tale

An original play written and directed by, and starring 5th grade students.

Seed Starting

Kohlrabi, one vegetable planned for the salad gardens, needed a head start indoors. At this station, students planted kohlrabi seeds that would be cared for by classrooms until planting.

Seed Sort

In this game, students tried to match salad garden seeds like carrots, lettuce, and radish with their vegetable. When they were successful, youth created a bookmark that included each kind of seed they identified.

Garden Mural

To gain input from the entire school, a blank piece of brown craft paper was hung along one of the gym's walls and labeled "What I want in the garden". Students were free to draw and write their ideas.

Soil and Compost Station

Master Composter volunteers brought a worm bin to explore as well as soil samples and microscopes to explore all the microorganisms found in soil and compost.

Nutrition Super Heroes

In this game, students assumed secret identities—the nutrients found in vegetables—and completed an obstacle course shaped like the human body.

Veggie Voting

Each student voted for the vegetable varieties they wanted to grow in the salad garden. After voting, each student made a thumb print of green ink on a poster. It was a way to track how many votes had been cast, an easy way to identify students who hadn't voted yet, and a clever way to have everyone leave the assembly with a "green thumb".



A Veggie Tale original play



Seed Starting



Garden Mural



Soil & Compost Station



Veggie Voting