



Seed to Salad: School-Based Program

Background

The Seed to Salad Program was developed and piloted by the Ithaca Children's Garden in the spring of 2007 at Northeast Elementary School in Ithaca, NY. Funded by an Ithaca Public Education Initiative Grant and supported in part by Cornell Garden-Based Learning, Seed to Salad uses gardening as a multidisciplinary vehicle to engage students across grade levels.

The program began in February, and continued until the end of the school year in June. Early activities focused on choosing which vegetables and varieties to grow, planning a gardening assembly for the entire school, and designing salad gardens to be planted in late April/early May. May and June were spent outside tending the gardens and planning a Salad Party to celebrate the harvest. While this particular pilot program did not include indoor grow lights, Seed to Salad is adaptable to indoor gardening.

When to do activities

The pilot program met outside of class time: before school, during lunchtime/recess, and after school. This accommodated students in a range of grade levels. Seed to Salad can easily be done by a single classroom or across grade levels, by an after school program, or as an extracurricular club led by a parent or community volunteer.

Salad gardens are the focus because they fit nicely within the spring growing season. Salad greens and quickly maturing vegetables can be planted in late April or early May. One of the biggest challenges with school gardens is summer maintenance. Salad gardens solve this issue by reaching harvest before the school year ends. In addition, salad gardens change quickly and are easy to grow, keeping things interesting and relatively successful for first time gardeners.

Decision-making is important!

Although Seed to Salad is a gardening program, the underlying theme is youth decision-making. From project planning to harvesting and celebration, youth should be included in as much of the process as possible.

Schedule

See reverse for a sample schedule of activities January-June. All of the activities were guided by youth involved in the pilot. Think of them as a menu to choose from and add to.





Seed to Salad: Sample schedule of activities

January:

- Begin planning the program
- Start recruiting youth or talk to your classroom or group about the project
- Gather supplies
- Confirm a budget
- Give school administrators a heads up, especially if you are seeking new gardening space



February/March:

- Campaign for Salad activity
- Gardening Assembly planning
- Assembly
- Determine garden locations at the school
- Order seeds



April:

- Garden design
- Garden bed preparation (organize a family volunteer evening or Saturday)
- Begin planting

May:

- Planting
- Garden maintenance
- Mid-season taste test
- Nutrition Super Heroes game



June:

- Garden maintenance
- Plan a Salad Party
- Salad Party
- Evaluation

