



School Gardens

Planning for Summer Break

Plan for Volunteers

- Identify job descriptions of what needs to be done, time involved, dates required
- Print relevant pages of the [Kansas Garden Guide](#) to provide training on specific tasks. Topics to consider:
 - Planting (pg. 45)
 - Watering (pg. 56)
 - Weeding (pg. 63)
 - Harvesting (pg. 115)
 - Laying Mulch (pg. 60)
 - Pruning (pg. 55)
 - Scouting for Pests

Recruit Volunteers

- Submit requests for volunteers through various outlets such as:
 - School Newsletter/Website
 - Email/Text from PTO
 - Local Extension Office/Master Gardener Program
 - Local Social Media Pages
 - Local Industry Professionals (garden centers/landscaping companies)
 - Library – Share Volunteers!
 - Community Garden Clubs/Community Garden
 - Local College/University/High School

Summer Planning

Orientation Session: Invite all potential and committed volunteers to a pre-summer training.

- If possible, provide a simple meal/snack.
- Include a presentation along with written instructions of tasks to be done while volunteering (see above).
- Allow participants to sign up to serve either a single date or regularly weekly/bi-monthly dates throughout the summer.
- Find out what skills/resources volunteers have to contribute.
- Teach volunteering logistics:
 - how to report volunteer hours
 - who to contact with questions/problems
 - where to discard weeds
 - water source
 - bathroom access
 - tool access/availability
- Create a master contact list ([See attached.](#))

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Communication

- Use a phone tree ([See attached.](#)) to create a chain of command for - communication. Assign three leaders, if possible, to serve as the points of contact for each month during the summer. During the summer, volunteers should contact their corresponding leader if they need assistance. Distribute the phone tree to the monthly leaders and have them reach out to the volunteers signed up for the month they are leading. The leaders should have access to contact the garden supervisor as needed.
- Create a closed Facebook group, or use another platform, to share garden updates and pictures among volunteers throughout the summer. This unifies the group and creates a supportive environment.
- Groupme is a way to easily message the entire group of volunteers, sub-groups or individuals. It is also possible to share photos using this tool.
- Encourage volunteers to subscribe to our K-State Hort Newsletter so they can receive timely gardening advice relevant to their days in the garden. The newsletter can be distributed to the volunteers as a pdf and individual articles can be sent via links through email and any of the communication tools mentioned previously.

Retaining Volunteers

- Volunteers are more likely to return if they feel valued and see the benefits. Document the efforts of summer volunteers through the school's social media outlets. Invite volunteers to participate in advanced training opportunities in your community to help everyone grow in their plant care knowledge. K-State Garden Hour is one example of a monthly enrichment opportunities. Many garden centers offer lectures and hands-on activities.
- Allow volunteers to take home some of the harvest and extra plants when there is excess. Ask local horticulture-based businesses if they will sponsor your club and offer coupons to garden volunteers who shop at their business.
- Recruit students to write thank you notes to the garden volunteers when school resumes in August. Include a photo of the students in the garden.
- Host a volunteer appreciation day with a meal provided. Invite administrators and teachers who use the garden to come and show their appreciation to the volunteers. Local businesses may support this event if acknowledged. Distribute a survey to volunteers seeking feedback about the summer garden program.

Don't forget to reach out to your local Extension office for support!

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National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

April 22, 2024