

Use Your School Grounds to Teach

Growing Healthy Schools Month is a great opportunity to engage students and the school community in hands-on learning using the school grounds and the local environment. Whether your school or community has a vibrant garden, a field, a rooftop, or a small patch of green space, the outdoors is a dynamic teaching space that will result in a rewarding, rich experience for all students. For schools and teachers eager to try something for the first time, or those with more experience teaching outside, we have included plenty of ideas to help take your program to the next level. Below are some recommended, seasonally- appropriate activities and projects. Now, get outside!

Activity/ Project	Supporting Resources
Start or expand a school garden	Start small and build community support early on. This and more in the Checklist for Starting a School Garden .
Teach a lesson on your school grounds	Use these Curricula Recommendations to connect what you are doing in the classroom to the garden (and vice versa).
Serve garden produce in the cafeteria	Whether it's a simple taste test or incorporating garden produce into the school lunch any school garden program can make connections with the cafeteria. Learn more by visiting the Slow Food USA Garden to Cafeteria Program webpage.
Prepare for Strawberries and Salad Greens (Spring 2018)	Prep your strawberry bed now and you can expect a bumper harvest come May. Find out what to plant when here .
Plant a tree on your school grounds	Planting a tree (fruit or shade) is a memorable experience for students. Check out the Basic Tree Planting Guidelines and Apply for School Tree Planting Program (Due Nov. 1) . Contact Laura Bassett at LBassett@caseytrees.org for more info.
Green your school grounds	Apply to the RiverSmart Schools program , which offers financial and technical assistance for schools to install practices such as rain gardens, BayScaping, pervious pavement, and rain cisterns to control stormwater pollution. Applications are due Oct 25 . Contact Patricia Doan at Patricia.Doan@dc.gov with questions.
Know your soil	Collect soil samples for nutrient and toxin testing of your soil and amend it as needed. Fall is the best time to improve your soil for a successful spring growing season.
Develop new partnerships	School grounds are living classrooms, they require maintenance, experienced outdoor educators, and specific technical support. Find a partner organization that can support your program.
Start a school chicken or bee project	Egg-laying hens and bees are a great way to engage new students and add interest to your garden, learn more here:

	http://osse.dc.gov/node/1153896 (chickens) and here: http://osse.dc.gov/node/1126792 (bees).
Schoolyard Investigations	No need to take a bus to go on these trips! Search for signs of living things by going on a Schoolyard Safari , or see what grade your school gets on this Schoolyard Report Card .
Explore your Neighborhood	See the environmental features of some the District's neighborhoods through the eyes of a landscape architect by going on a self-guided walking tour developed by the American Society for Landscape Architects. Or, plug in your ZIP code on the DC Parks Rx search to get a list of parks closest to your school.
Get Close to the Anacostia River	Take your student on the water by going on a field experience with Anacostia Watershed Society , Chesapeake Bay Foundation , or Living Classrooms . Want to stay on land? Try visiting Kingman Island or Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens to see amazing wildlife habitat along the river that runs through the District.
Discover Environmental Exhibits at Museums	Here are some ideas of museum exhibits and programs on the National Mall can integrate environmental themes: history of food , plants , Native Americans , natural history investigations , and aerial and satellite observations .
Gone Fishing!	Want to see the fish, frogs, and turtles that call the District home? Take a tour of the Aquatic Resources Education Center , where you can also schedule a fishing clinic for your students.
Create a Plan to Connect with the Chesapeake Bay in the Spring	Each year, Chesapeake Bay Trust mini-grant applications are due in January for projects that begin will begin after March.

For more information or questions, please contact:

Sam Ullery, OSSES's school garden specialist at Sam.Ullery@dc.gov or visit <http://osse.dc.gov/service/school-garden-program>.

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