



Preschools SHINE Fact Sheet

Criteria for Element 5: Garden-Enhanced Nutrition

- Provide enriching garden experiences for children.
- Include an edible indoor or outdoor garden.

Children who plant and harvest their own fruits and vegetables are more likely to eat those foods. By incorporating edible gardens at child care sites, child care programs can help children learn where foods come from and develop an early connection with nature. The garden can also be used as an interactive classroom space to enrich children's learning of various academic subjects such as mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies. Having an edible garden at the child care program is a valuable teaching tool that is proven to enhance the ability of children to appreciate and eat healthy foods. Follow the practices below to meet the criteria for Element 5.

Ensure Policies are in Place

- Do you have a nutrition education policy? Does it include edible gardening? Having an edible garden policy can lead to providing enriching garden experiences for young children.

Choose a Curriculum or Garden Resources

- Use a developmentally appropriate curriculum to incorporate edible gardening into the child care program. For examples of garden curricula and resources, visit the following Web pages:
 - U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Grow It, Try It, Like It!
(<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it-try-it-it>)
 - Life Lab's Sowing the Seeds of Wonder: Discovering the Garden in Early Childhood Education
(<http://www.lifelab.org/store/curriculum/#sww>)
 - California School Garden Network (<http://www.csgn.org>)
- Train staff members to teach gardening activities to preschoolers. Share the edible garden curriculum with families.
- Encourage families to share their gardening knowledge and provide assistance with the garden program.

Consider What and When to Grow

- Consider a variety of fruits and vegetables and the conditions they may require. For online resources, visit Life Lab (<http://www.lifelab.org/2012/02/planning-annual-vegetable-crops/>) or the California School Garden Network (<http://www.csgn.org/crop-planning>).



- Select varieties of edible and safe plants that will do well in your growing area. Consider the amount of sunlight, space, and time needed to grow the plants.

Include Garden Activities

- Introduce children to soil, seeds, plants, and animals through songs, chants, storybooks, and gardening activities. Visit the Healthy & Active Preschoolers Web page (http://www.healthypreschoolers.com/?page_id=27) for a variety of songs and storybooks.
- Plan garden activities that will engage children in physical movement and enhance fine motor skills.
- Allow children opportunities to participate in hands-on science activities featuring plants.
- Incorporate arts and crafts into garden learning.
- Encourage children to engage their senses in the garden by touching and naming plants and harvesting vegetables, herbs, and fruits.
- Help children develop a connection to the food they grow by tending to the plants, harvesting and preparing them, and cooking and eating the herbs, vegetables, and fruits they grow.
- Use the garden to practice skills from other curricular subjects—for example, have children practice mathematics skills (such as counting) or practice language arts through naming colors, shapes, plants, fruits, vegetables, and animals in the garden.
- For garden lesson plan activities or ideas, visit the following Web pages:
 - Farm to Preschool Program: Preschool Gardens (<http://farmtopreschool.org/preschoolgardens.html>)
 - Farm to Preschool Program: Harvest of the Month (<http://www.farmtopreschool.org/documents/F2P%20Curriculum.pdf>)
 - Farm to Preschool Program: Curricula (<http://farmtopreschool.org/curricula.html>)
 - USDA Preschool/Child Care Garden Resources (<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/resource-library/school-and-preschool-gardens/preschool-child-care-garden-resources>)

Practice Food Safety

- Ensure children wash their hands after working in the garden.
- Consider safety rules for gardening and whether the soil, water, and garden are safe for children.
- Inspect all produce harvested from the garden.
- Wash all produce carefully before serving to young children.
- For additional food safety tips, refer to the USDA's Food Safety Tips for School Gardens (<http://nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20110822025700.pdf>).