

# Veggie Bytes



## Welcome Gardeners!

Here is the first edition of the Louisiana School Garden electronic newsletter “Veggie Bytes”. This newsletter is designed to help educators and students use the school garden to learn more about the natural world around them. There are several key components to this newsletter that will help you along with your gardening adventures. The “What’s Growing” section provides information on what and when to plant, as well as how to maintain particular plants. The “Activity Corner” provides lessons that can easily be used to connect your classroom to the garden. The “Seeding Service” section will give you ideas on how to use your school garden to improve the local community. Plus there is much more.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and hope to hear from YOU, our readers! If you have a great lesson, garden tip, or garden photo that you would like to share with other Louisiana school gardeners, please forward them to me. As future editions of the newsletter are produced, we will do our best to include your contributions!

Happy Gardening,

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*Gardening is a partnership between the plant and the gardener to the benefit of both.*

*Dan Gill*



*Students at Jesus the Good Shepard School show off their first radish harvest!*

# What's Growing!

## Gardening Tips!

So you have a garden space but don't know what to plant or when to plant it???? Use Dan Gill's guide to help your class decide what can be planted in the next few months! Note certain plants can be direct seeded into the garden. This means that the seeds can be planted in the native soil in your garden space. Other plants do better if started in sterilized media (a germinating mix) and then planted into the ground once true leaves have sprouted. We call this "transplanting" or growing "transplants". If your class decided to grow a few transplants indoors place the containers close to a sunny window, follow correct depth for seeding on the seed package, and don't forget to water!

### Vegetables to Plant in November:

Beets, carrots, collards, mustard greens, radishes, turnips, and spinach can all be directly seeded into the garden.

Start cabbage, celery, lettuce, and Swiss chard transplants.

Plan individual toes of garlic and shallots directly in the garden.

### Vegetables to Plant in December:

Beets, carrots, collards, mustard greens, radish, spinach, and turnips can all be directly seeded into the garden.

Plant your transplants you started in November into the garden. These include cabbage, celery, lettuce, and Swiss chard.

If you can still find garlic and shallot transplants, you can also plant these in December. Don't forget, you can plant onion sets, too!

Start seeds (indoors) for cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower. You can plant these transplants in January! Remember ....only plant these seeds if you have a student or teacher who can care for them over the holidays.

### Vegetables to plant in January:

Beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, collards, English and snow peas, and Irish potatoes can be planted directly into the garden.

Plant transplants of lettuce, mustards, and onions.

Start seeds indoors for eggplant and tomatoes.

### A few tips on growing vegetables.....

1. Seeds are usually planted twice as deep as the seed is wide. However, this varies between the different vegetables; therefore, it is best to plant the seeds as deep as the seed package recommends. Use this as an opportunity to have the class do some measurements.

2. Space your vegetable crops appropriately in the garden. Cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower like to be at least 12-18 inches apart. Head lettuce should be planted every 12 inches, while leaf lettuce can be planted closer in a continuous row (1-2 inches between seeds). Mustard, collard greens, and spinach seed should be spaced about 2 inches apart. Garlic and shallots should be spaced about 6-12 inches between toes.

3. Water your plants. Most vegetable crops need at least 1 inch of rain per week. You can take weather data as a class. Place a rain gauge in your garden. If you don't get any rain, water the garden until the gauge is filled to the 1 inch mark.

**Remember that after your class plants seeds or transplants, they should water them in immediately....even if the ground is moist.**



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# EPA Environmental Education Grant Awarded LSU AgCenter

“Growing a Garden 101” grant funded by The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was awarded to the LSU AgCenter to provide schools with the materials needed to start a school garden. There were eleven schools chosen to participate in this project. Teachers and principals from the selected schools attended a 1-day workshop held at Louisiana House on LSU’s campus. The workshop covered information ranging from how to start, design and maintain a school garden, and to how to grow vegetables. The workshop concluded with a tour by Mr. Steven Babcock of the U-High school garden.



*Grant participants collecting supplies for gardens*

Garden supplies such as hoses, timers, watering cans, fertilizer, vegetable seeds, rain gauges, shovels, trowels, hoes and rakes, and raised bed kits were distributed to the teachers, along with a curriculum and informational books on vegetable gardening. In return, the teachers will survey their participating garden class to see if there is a change in the students’ attitudes towards the environment from the beginning to end of the school year. LSU AgCenter personnel will visit each school twice during the school year to check their progress. The “Growing a Garden 101” grant is also supporting the publication of Veggie Bytes made available to all Louisiana school gardeners.

Congratulations to the following schools for taking advantage of this opportunity!

- Ms Rebecca Clark and Ms Kim Fredrick at Park’s Middle School in St. Martinville, La.
- Mr. John Carambat and Mr. Mark Richards at St. Pauls in Covington, La.
- Ms Mary Lou Rivere at Northside Tech Middle School in Bogalusa, La.
- Ms Joanne Zeringue at Lowery Intermediate in Donaldsonville, La.
- Ms Sandra Givens at Mt. Hermon School in Mt. Hermon, La.
- Ms Debbie Thames and Ms Elizabeth Rigdon at Family Community Christian School in Winnsboro, La.
- Mr. Dameon Jackson at Amite High School in Amite, La.
- Mr. Chris Lopiparo at Dutchtown High School in Geismer, La.
- Ms Lise Caron at Jesus the Good Shepherd Elementary School in Monroe, La.
- Mr. Steven Babcock at University High Lab School in Baton Rouge, La.
- Ms. Kathleen Dorsey Bellow at Sacred Heart School in Lake Charles, La.

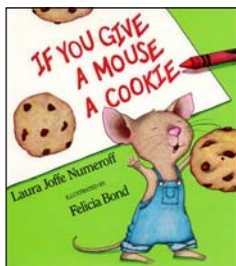
*St. Paul’s students admiring their hard work. Students planted beans, sunflowers, strawberries, cabbage, and shallots in their fall garden!*



# Connecting the Classroom to the Garden

## Language Arts:

Read the book "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie" by Laura Joffe Numeroff to the class. Allow students to make up their own stories, but have them change the title to "If You Give a Mouse a \_\_\_\_\_" (insert something they are growing in the garden). Have students fold 3 or 4 sheets of paper in half. They can staple the inseam to create a blank book. Each student can then make up his or her tale after the mouse eats a turnip or broccoli, etc.



Students can then take turns reading their books out loud to the class.

Activity idea provided by the Iowa Nutrition Network

## Science:

Photosynthesis is a topic taught to students in many grade levels. In addition to your normal photosynthesis lesson, try adding this little twist.... After discussing the sun's role in the plants ability to produce food, ask the question does sunlight affect germination? We know it is necessary to produce sugars, but does a plant need sun to germinate. Have the students formulate hypothesis's... Sunlight is necessary for seed germination and sunlight is

not necessary for seed germination. First prepare your paper cups. Poke a hole in the bottom of the pot for drainage. Line the paper cup with a paper towel. Have student's plant bean or corn seeds in small paper cups. Plant three seeds at ¼ inch deep into each paper cup. Place half of the paper in a dark cabinet. Place the other half of the paper cups in a sunny window sill. Water all seeds with the same amount of water once a day, or when the soil feels dry. Measure the growth of the plants once a week for four weeks. Make sure the inside of your classroom is around 70-75°F. Observe the cups for four weeks. Students can graph the

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## Thrifty Transplant Containers

Gardening on a budget? Purchasing transplants can become costly especially if you have 25 students and need 25 broccoli plants. Some vegetable plant 6 packs can cost up to \$4.00 each. That's a total of \$24.00 for broccoli plants for your school garden. How about spending \$4.00 on seeds and growing your own transplants? Saving money by starting your own transplants can be easy and fun. For a list of what to plant when, see "What's Growing" on page 4 for a planting schedule. You may say "\$4.00 for seed money", but what about container costs? This is where students come into the picture. There are plenty containers we already have around the house that can be used to start seedlings. Ask students to save some of the following items: milk jugs, strawberry, blueberry, raspberry containers, baby food jars, plastic bunt pans, rotisserie chicken containers, etc.

Check out the pictures for neat ideas!



*Pumpkin seedling growing in a recycled strawberry basket*



*Before you plant seeds into recycled containers make sure to add drainage holes. Pumpkin seedling growing in recycled milk jugs, onion plastic cartons, a traditional six-pack, and plastic bunt pan. The picture on the left shows the how large the plants can grow when the tops of milk jugs remain attached to the bottoms. The greenhouse effect occurred.*

## Connecting the Classroom to the Garden

plants growth and draw pictures of the differences in growth. Ask the students to measure the growth of the sun plants and dark plants at the end of the three weeks. Do they notice any differences? Some things you might notice are: 1. All seeds will germinate. 2. Sunlight is not necessary for a plant to germinate. However, when left in the dark plants will stretch and become long leggy and white. 3. Plants grown in the sunlight will be shorter (not searching for sunlight) and dark green.

**Art:**  
Have students paint signs welcoming visitors to the garden. Students can also paint smaller signs labeling the vegetable and flowering plants growing in the garden. Ask students to label them with both the common and scientific name. Have students paint stepping stones. The stepping stones can be placed in areas that get muddy so that students shoes don't get too messy when working in the garden. Build trellis, garden benches, etc for the garden in your woodworking classes.

Check out the photo of the scarecrow/ planting containers at Parks Middle School!



*Park's Middle School students create scarecrows out of old tires, tin cans, hats, and swimming toys. The best part is the tires are filled with soil and will be used as planters!*

### What's Growing!

4. Have bugs? Start squashing them! If they become a huge problem, remove the plants that they are eating and plant something new. There are several pesticides that can be used. You can check with your local nursery or county agent for recommendations. You will need to know the insect you are trying to kill on what type of plant the insect is on. STICK with school policy though. If you are not allowed to use pesticides around the children, stay insecticide-free!

5. Mulch your garden so you don't have to fight the weeds! Pull weeds when you first see them. If weeds go to seed, you will just have that many more to pick next season.



***Growing Gardens!***

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