

Guidelines for school gardens

Purpose

The School Garden can be a useful teaching aid. There is much to be learned also in the field of environmental studies, through the students working the school garden.

Responsibility

It is the Head Teacher's responsibility to either supervise garden work or delegate a teacher to supervise.

Policy

Each school is encouraged to use gardens to:

Beautify the school;

Teach children the basics of horticulture;

Encourage and promote local food as healthy, nutritious and cheap.

Procedure

School Gardens

Heads and teachers should show an interest in the working of a garden. They should help the children to do the work as this will encourage them to do more themselves.

Some theory will be helpful in the classroom, but most of the work will be practical and take place in the garden itself.

The School Garden can become a useful aid in both teaching and learning. Measuring, counting seeds, setting them out and counting the cost are all excellent aids to arithmetic. There is much to be learned also in the field of environmental studies.

Gardening is best done in the early morning or evening when the heat of the sun is not so strong. It is best to water plants in the evening so that the water can reach down to the roots before it evaporates in the sun.

All schools, not just boarding schools, should have gardening on the time-table. Even where ground is poor or swampy, gardening can be done in boxes.

Heads should try to identify a plot for the school garden near to the school. If this can be done there will be less theft by birds or other animals, less time will be wasted going to and from the site and children will have a better chance to observe the "fruits of their labours." Try to choose ground where the soil is light and drains well. Flat sites are better than sloping ones because there is less chance of erosion.

In choosing the site, remember that water will be needed -especially in periods of drought. Try to avoid long trips carrying heavy water buckets.

Avoid sites which are always in the shade of trees. Fruit and vegetables need light to grow properly.

If the site chosen is near the bush or jungle, dig a trench about 60cm deep and 60cm wide between the garden and the bush. This will prevent the roots of jungle trees stealing the goodness from the soil in your garden.

For more information on this subject, the local publication 'Our School Garden' is recommended.

Guidelines for making compost

Garden crops take plant food out of the soil and the gardener then takes the plants out of the soil. If more young plants are to grow, the gardener must try to replace some of the goodness in the soil. The gardener does this by making compost and adding it to the soil to make it more fertile.

Compost is made by helping plant and animal waste to decay, or decompose, by creating good conditions for 'Nature' to do its work. One way of making good compost is in heaps or mounds. Making compost will reduce the bulk of the waste material, concentrate the foods that plants need, and make the plant food easier to use.

1. Mark out an area 2m by 3m Put all leaves, grass and so on in this area to a height of about 12cm. Don't put woody things like sticks and coconut shells in the compost heap.
2. Add any animal droppings that can be collected from pigs, chickens etc and sprinkle these on the leaves. The ash from the incinerator will also be useful if spread thinly over the surface.
3. Keep the heap moist by adding water from time to time.
4. Keep building up the height of the heap until it is about 1m high at the top. In hot weather must be added at least once a day.
5. After about 2 or 3 weeks the heap will need to be adjusted. The part that is in the middle should be put on the outside, while the outer edges should be put in the middle.
6. After another 3 weeks you must 'turn' the heap again, putting the outside in the middle and the middle to the outside.
7. After another 3 weeks the compost should be ready to dig in to your garden where it will enrich the soil and make your efforts more rewarding.
8. For more advice consult your nearest Agriculture Extension Officer.