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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
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FACT SHEET
Information about the Kentucky State University Cooperative Extension Program 2021

Planning Your Garden around the School Calendar

Dr. Leigh Whittinghill, Assistant Professor of Urban Agriculture

The first two steps in planning your school garden are finding a good (or as good as possible) location on site and determining how you will grow your crops. Crops can be raised in ground, in raised beds, or in containers. After that, you must decide what to grow.

When selecting crops to grow in your school garden, you should do or consider the following:

- Work from an existing curriculum, such as the Junior Master Gardener curriculum
- Plan around a garden theme, such as a salsa, pizza or ABC garden. For more information on planning a salsa garden, check out our fact sheet Making a Salsa Garden (KYSU-CEP-FAC-0018), available at https://www.kysu.edu/documents/college-of-agriculture-communities-the-sciences/salsagarden_2019.pdf
- Showcase crops commonly found in the grocery store
- Showcase crops or varieties not commonly found in the grocery store
- Talk with other programs and teachers
    - Are there crops that fit with cultures or languages being taught?
    - Are there crops that fit with periods of history or literature being taught?
    - What crops might be useful in cooking, nutrition, or other Family and Consumer Sciences classes?
    - Check in with art and science teachers as well to see how they may be interested in using the garden space with their curricula

Once you have some ideas about what crops you would like to grow, you should make a plan or calendar for planting and harvesting activities. For some help with this, check out our fact sheet Developing a Crop Planting Calendar (KYSU-CEP-FAC-0078), available at https://www.kysu.edu/documents/school-of-agriculture-communities-and-the-environment/planting_calendar_with_tables_accessible_031021.pdf. School gardens do, however, have an added challenge of having to contend with the school calendar. Students are around in the spring and fall to help with garden activities but are

often absent during the summer months. Depending on programming at a given school, there may be little to no supervision or maintenance over the summer months. The solution to this issue comes in three parts:

1. Plant spring crops that can be harvested by the students
2. Only plant summer crops that can be left unattended
3. Plant fall crops when the students get back to school

Spring Crops

- Check that you have enough days between the earliest planting date and the end of school for the variety you have chosen
- For crops that take less time to mature:
  - Count backwards from the end of school for the latest spring planting date
  - You may be able to get more than one harvest in with some plants (e.g. leaf lettuce and radishes)
- For crops that take more time to reach maturity:
  - You may be able to start transplants earlier
  - Look for more cold tolerant varieties so you can plant them a little earlier
  - If you are going to be around during the summer, try to time them so students see them when they are small, then pick them yourself later
  - Try to select varieties that mature faster

The following table shows some good candidates for spring crops, whether they should be planted from seed or as transplants, when transplants should be started, the earliest planting dates for Western/Central/Eastern Kentucky, and a range of how long it takes plants to mature (days to maturity). For more specific days to maturity, check the information for a specific variety from your seed supplier.

Crops	Seed or Transplant	Date/Time to start Transplants	Earliest planting date	Days to maturity
Beets	Seed	------	March 10/ March 15/March 20	55-60
Head lettuce	Seed or transplant	5-7 weeks	March 15/March 25/April 1	60-80
Broccoli	Transplant	Feb. 5	March 30/April 5/April 10	40-90
Brussels sprouts	Transplant	Feb. 5	March 30/April 5/April 10	80-90
Cabbage	Transplant	Jan. 20	March 15/March 25/April 1	60-100
Endive	Seed or transplant	3-4 weeks	March 15/March 25/April 1	60-90
Kale	Seed or transplant	4-6 weeks	March 10/March 20/April 1	50-60
Kohlrabi	Seed	------	March 15/March 20/ March 25	50-70
Leaf lettuce	Seed	------	March 15/March 25/April 1	30-50
Mustard greens	Seed	------	March 15/March 25/April 1	28-60
Peas	Seed	------	Feb 20/March 1/March 15	60-80
Swiss Chard	Seed or transplant	5-6 weeks	March 15/March 20/April 1	55-60
Turnips	Seed	------	March 1/March 10/March 15	40-60
Turnip greens	Seed	------	March 1/March 10/March 15	30-50
Green onions	Seed or transplant	Late February to mid-March	March 10/March 20/ April 1 March 15/March 25/April 1	40-60

Summer Crops:

- Choose varieties that
  - will take the summer vacation to mature
  - will tolerate neglect (water, pests, etc.)
  - If possible, plant seed, transplants, slips right before school lets out and harvest when school is back in session

The following table shows some good candidates for summer crops, whether they should be planted from seed or as transplants, when transplants should be started, the earliest planting dates for Western/Central/ Eastern Kentucky, and a range of how long it takes plants to mature (days to maturity). For more specific days to maturity, check the information for a specific variety from your seed supplier.

Crops	Seed or Transplant	Date/Time to start Transplants	Earliest planting date	Days to maturity
Green beans, pole	Seed	------	April 10/April 25/May 1	60-90
Potatoes	Seed pieces or slips	------	March 15/March 15/March 20	90-140
Lima beans	Seed	------	April 15/May 1/May 10	65-90
Muskmelons	Seed or transplant	April 1, 3-4 weeks	April 20/ May 10/May 15	75-90
Okra	Transplant	------	April 20/May 10/May 15	50-80
Onions	Seed, transplant, or sets	10-12 weeks or late February to mid-March	March 10/March 20/April 1 March 15/March 25/April 1 March 1/March 10/March 15	40-120
Parsley	Seed	------	March 10/March 20/April 1	70-90
Parsnips	Seed	------	March 10/March 20/April 1	90-110
Pumpkins	Seed	------	April 20/May 5/May 10	90-120
Sweet corn	Seed	------	April 10/April 20/May 1	60-100
Sweet potatoes	Slips	A few weeks	May 1/May 10/May 20	120-140
Tomatoes	Seed or transplant	March 15, 4-7 weeks	April 20/May 5/May 15	60-90
Watermelons	Seed or transplant	March 25, 4-6 weeks	April 20/May 5/May 15	70-90
Winter squash	Seed	------	April 20/May 10/May 15	80-120

Fall Crops:

- Check how the latest planting date lines up with:
  - your first day of school
  - harvest dates of summer crops
- Consider varieties with shorter times to maturity
- Explore season extension, such as row covers, low tunnels, or high tunnels, to get more time in the fall

The following table shows some good candidates for fall crops, whether they should be planted from seed or as transplants, when transplants should be started, the latest planting dates for Western/Central/Eastern Kentucky, and a range of how long it takes plants to mature (days to maturity). For more specific days to maturity, check the information for a specific variety from your seed supplier.

Crops	Seed or Transplant	Date/Time to start Transplants	Earliest planting date	Days to maturity
Beets	Seed	------	Aug. 1/ Aug. 10/Aug. 15	70-75
Broccoli	Transplant	July 1	July 15/Aug. 1/Aug. 15	60-80
Collards	Seed	------	Aug. 15/Aug. 20/Aug. 20	80-90
Kale	Seed	------	July 15/Aug. 1/Aug. 15	70-80
Kohlrabi	Seed	------	July 15/Aug. 1/Aug. 15	60-70
Leaf lettuce	Seed	------	Aug. 1/Aug. 15/Sept. 1	40-60
Mustard Greens	Seed	------	Aug. 1/Aug. 15/Sept. 1	50-60
Radishes	Seed	------	Sept. 1/Sept. 15/Oct. 1	30-40
Snow peas	Seed	------	July 20/Aug. 1/Aug. 8	50-70
Spinach	Seed	------	Aug. 15/Sept. 1/Sept. 15	50-60
Turnips	Seed	------	Aug. 1/Aug. 10/Aug. 20	50-60
Turnip greens	Seed	------	Aug. 1/Aug. 10/Aug. 20	50-60
Garlic	Set - cloves	------	Nov. 1/Nov. 7/Nov. 15	Harvest the following spring/ summer

References:

Johnny's Selected Seeds. 2021. https://www.johnnyseeds.com/
Home Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky. ID-128. University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service
How to Grow Sweet Potatoes. 2016. Michigan State University Available at:
https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/how_to_grow_sweet_potatoes

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