



Farm to School and Community Newsletter

A seasonal newsletter for farmers, schools, and communities.

SPRING ISSUE 2017

What crop did the farmer plant? *Beets me!*

Who tells chicken jokes? *Comedi-hens!*

Why did the cabbage win the race? *Because it was ahead!*

Welcome to the spring garden newsletter from the UF/IFAS Extension Family Nutrition Program Farm to School and Community Team! I hope these puns make you smile, but don't worry - I know that gardening is no joke.

As we coax our gardens back to life this spring we also want to celebrate new beginnings on the Farm to School and Community Team. In the last few months, we have welcomed three new District Food Systems Coordinators: Travis Mitchell (Northeast), Judy Dampier (Northeast), and Allyson BeCraft (South Central).

In this edition, we will share successful stories of how students have integrated gardens and healthy eating into their lives. We will also look at what it takes to keep a school garden running. Read on for more information about grants, harvesting, and guidance on school garden success when working with your team.

Sometimes the winter and spring season during the school year can be difficult. There are fewer breaks, lots of testing, and lots of stress. We hope that your garden is a place you can go to rest and refuel. When things get too hectic, come out to the garden for a few minutes. Pull some weeds, plant a few seeds, or take a moment to observe your garden.



We wish you the best in your gardening endeavors. Please reach out to our team with questions or success stories. We would love to feature your garden in a future issue.

Happy gardening!

Beth Owens
South District Food Systems Coordinator



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

[Social Components of Gardening Success.....2](#)

[Garden Spotlight: Tallahassee School of Math and Science3](#)

[For Farmers: Farm to School Checklist.....3](#)

[Harvesting Tips.....4](#)

[Upcoming Grants.....4](#)

[F2SC Contact Info.....5](#)

SOCIAL COMPONENTS FOR GARDENING SUCCESS

Contributed by Malory Foster, South Central District Food Systems Coordinator and Tiffany Torres, Northwest District Food Systems Coordinator

A school or community garden is so much more than soil, plants, and shovels. It is the people that make it happen and make it fun! Each garden is a social ecosystem made stronger with diversity, community involvement, and widespread cultural support. This is no quick or easy process! Just like a garden's physical processes, creating a successful school or community garden

takes patience and persistent attention. By generating a culture around your garden, you are cultivating widespread support while establishing expectations for years to come. It's true, many hands really do make light work! To get started, consider delving into these three social components: **leadership, programming, and buy-in.**



“Each garden is a social ecosystem made stronger with diversity, community involvement, and widespread cultural support.”

Leadership is the seed that helps a garden sprout. While it is not ideal that a garden rely on a single garden champion over the long term, it takes leadership to spark inspiration and gain support for why it's a good idea to have a garden. The garden leader(s) empowers others to utilize their diverse skills, such as public relations, communication, teaching, and event planning, in order to help the garden run smoothly. Leaders can task interested people with arranging garden programs, educational activities, or planting/harvesting events. Garden leaders see the long term vision for a successful garden, develop it, and share it with the community.

A diverse garden committee with varying skillsets will inevitably lead to diverse programmatic avenues. **Programming** helps the garden integrate into the rest of the school, parents, clubs, and outside community. It attracts people to the garden to do something fun or interesting! While people flock to the garden to read, write, craft, socialize, or... work in the garden, they are simultaneously observing the seasonal happenings in the garden. In this way, programming has the unique ability to both directly and indirectly educate the community. Moreover, programming also helps create garden *identity*. To initiate building this identity, ensure your garden has a name! Bringing people to the garden to engage in diverse activities and programming helps create buy-in and promotes cultural exchange. Additionally, engaging programming will reinforce confidence within garden leadership as they can rest assured that not only is the garden being tended, but it is also beginning to be seen as a valued place in the community, promoting joy, curiosity, and wonder!

Over time, as leadership diversifies, programming becomes robust, and the garden grows into its name and identity, you will begin to see that the garden also has buy-in. **Buy-in** helps school and community expectations for the garden mature. When expectations are present, people show up. Buy-in creates a garden that people want to be part of by

contributing time, energy, expertise, and other resources. Furthermore, buy-in inspires others to develop creative programming which may eventually lead to tradition. Take a look at these examples of traditions that could spring up in your garden over time:

“We know that each Spring, it is tradition to hold a Mother’s Day Tea celebration at the garden.”

“When the starfruit fruits in the Fall, the local Night Sky Observation Club hosts a ‘starry night’ event at the garden where community members eat sliced starfruit and gaze through the telescope.”

“Fifty parents and neighbors gather in the garden biannually for ‘School Beautification Day’ to mulch beds, trim fruit trees, and plant new plants in the garden. While the adults work, Mr. Hansen teaches the little kids to propagate plant cuttings for families to take home. Our garden is a resource for the community, and the community is a resource for our garden.”

Once integrated, consistent **leadership**, creative **programming**, and community **buy-in**, lead to sustainable school or community gardens. These three social components for garden success encourage us to consider our goals and purpose for the garden. With this in mind, we can also consider what kinds of programming will occur in the garden and take that into account when creating a garden design. Ask yourself, what do you want to do in this garden space? Do you have teaching and gathering areas, seating, or visually interesting aspects in the garden? Do you have a garden leadership team, or does one person solely run the garden? How can you create (or empower someone else to create) programming in order to diversify leadership? Look not only for gardeners, but also for event planners, educators, social media butterflies, and other skills to infuse your garden with variety. Finally, be patient and persistent – each garden has its dormancy and its growth spurt!

GARDEN SPOTLIGHT: Tallahassee School of Math and Science

Contributed by Tiffany Torres, Northwest District Food Systems Coordinator

[Tallahassee School of Math and Science](#) is a K-8th grade public charter school located in Tallahassee, Florida. About a year ago, the school secured a Lowe's Toolbox For Education grant in order to create a living outdoor classroom. Over the course of a year, that classroom blossomed into a beautiful edible vegetable garden complete with six raised beds, a stump circle, benches, and a pollinator garden. The raised garden beds, each of which are maintained by individual teachers at the school, were planted using techniques (such as square foot gardening) learned while attending the monthly Garden Educator Training Series hosted by UF/IFAS Extension in Leon County. With significant leadership from Philip Froemke (the school's Food Service/Transportation Coordinator, and now Garden Coordinator) TSMS has hosted a number of events, including a planting day and 'harvest' festival. In doing so, the garden has become a significant point of school pride at TSMS.

In December, Philip Froemke partnered with the Family Nutrition Program to host a "Kale Taste Test" event which provided students with the opportunity to meet a local farmer, harvest kale from the school garden, learn about kale's nutritional benefits, and finally taste the kale that they so carefully tended for several months. By allowing students to discover real-life connections between nutrition, health, gardening,

and farming, this hands-on experience expanded the students' views of the seed to table cycle and their place in the food system. The kale tasting event was praised by the local news, where students who were eager to be interviewed were quoted saying "I liked [the experience] because it made me feel like I did it... and it tasted good!" So, what's next for this successful school garden program? Chickens!



FOR FARMERS: FARM TO SCHOOL CHECKLIST

Contributed by Christina Walmer, Northwest District Food Systems Coordinator

Florida schools spend millions of dollars each year on fresh produce for their breakfast and lunch programs. Having a school district as a customer is a great way to diversify your customer base with regular, high-volume sales. Many schools are interested in increasing the amount of Florida-grown produce they procure. The first step is to set up a meeting with your nearby school districts' foodservice department, and here are some important things to keep in mind to get started! Please check out the complete [Farm to School Marketing Checklist](#) for more information!

Understand School Purchasing Processes: School districts are able to procure fresh produce through a few different processes and must abide by federal competitive procurement policies for their National School Lunch Programs. Each district determines their small purchase threshold, so your initial sale to a school district may be an [easy process](#) if it falls under that threshold.

Develop a Food Safety Plan: School districts and their distributors determine food safety requirements for vendors they will work with. Some require very little in the way of food safety while others more stringently require third party audits by specific auditing companies. Regardless, it is wise for any farmer interested in selling to schools to have a written food safety plan.

Consider Volume and Product Types: School menus are usually written on a monthly or quarterly basis, so it is important to sit down with your local school foodservice

department well in advance of planting to determine the types and quantity of product they would be interested in purchasing. In your meeting, discuss the schools' storage and refrigeration capacity, processing equipment, and product specifications. These factors will help determine the types of products that will best suit the needs of the schools.

Understand Packaging and Delivery Requirements: Schools have very [specific needs](#) when it comes to packaging and delivery. Packaging requirements should be clearly defined. Schools quantify products by serving size, while farmers quantify products by weight or volume. Deliveries may need to be made to individual schools, a central warehouse, or dropped off with the mainline contract distributor. Background checks may be required for anyone making deliveries. Cooperation with other farmers may be able to offset the burden of multiple delivery points or achieve school districts' volume needs.

Focus on Relationship Building: Even if your meeting with school foodservice doesn't end up with a sale, continue the relationship and begin to build synergy and trust. Maybe there are other ways you can get involved such as being a Farmer in the Classroom guest or doing a cafeteria taste test of your product. Ask the department what kinds of educational events they provide, and see how you can get involved to start growing the relationship. By doing so, you can build common ground and figure out ways to make Farm to School procurement work for both parties.

TIPS FOR HAPPY HARVESTING

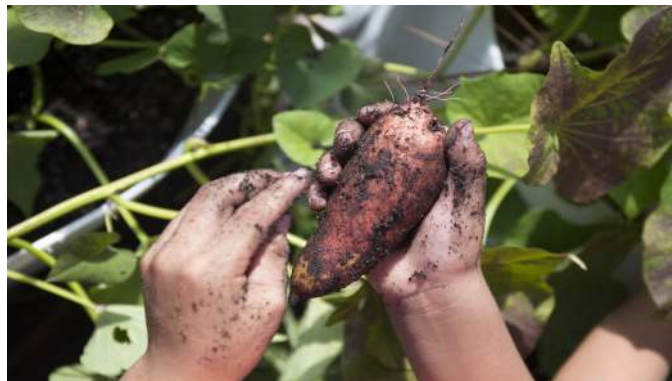
Contributed by Judy Dampier, Northeast District Food Systems Coordinator

So you have prepared the soil, planted the veggies, tended them diligently, now it's time to harvest. Or is it? Knowing when to harvest from the garden is important to enjoying vegetables at their peak of freshness and flavor!

Leafy greens and lettuces: These can be harvested two ways: Leaves can be picked on a continual basis, called the "cut and come again" approach, or you can wait until full maturity, known as the "one and done" approach.

Root vegetables: Many root vegetables such as carrots and radishes are ready to harvest when the head of the veggie is peaking out of the soil. Pull a couple to gauge size.

Cucurbits: Crops such as slicing cucumbers and summer squashes should be picked at 6-8" long when skin is tender. Picking frequently will promote more flowering and more fruit!



Potatoes: Both Irish and sweet potatoes are generally ready when vines die back. As vines begin to yellow, dig around and check potato size.

Beans: More picking leads to more beans! Beans are ready to harvest when pods are full but not bulging. Pick one and if it snaps, they're ready. Since beans flower continuously, make sure to look for full pods since beans of different maturity may be on the same plant.

For more information: Remember that the seed packet is a great source of information about proper harvesting. You can also check out the [Vegetable Production Handbook](#) for any other questions that you may have! Or contact your local UF/IFAS Extension office or District Food Systems Coordinator from the Farm to School and Community team for help (see page 5).

Happy Harvesting!

GARDEN GRANT RESOURCES

Compiled by Allyson BeCraft, South Central District Food Systems Coordinator

Carton 2 Garden Grant

Open to all public and private schools in the United States, contest winners will be selected based on their implementation of an innovative garden creation featuring creative and sustainable uses for repurposed milk and juice cartons. Your school does not need a garden to participate. Twenty-seven contest winners will be selected to receive prizes valued \$1,000-\$5,000. All entries are due by April 12, 2017. For more information, check out the [Kids Gardening website](#).

White-Reinhardt Mini-Grant

Mini-grants are offered to state and county Farm Bureaus in amounts up to \$500 for classroom ag literacy programs for grades K-12. Mini-grants are on a competitive basis with priority given to those programs demonstrating a need for financial support. Applications are due April 15, 2017. For more information, visit the [American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture website](#).

Fuel Up to Play 60 Grant

K-12 schools that are a part of the National School Lunch Program and enrolled in the Fuel Up to Play 60 Program are eligible to apply for this grant. Schools can receive up to \$4000 to implement healthy initiatives focused on healthy eating and physical activity. The next application cycle opens Spring 2017. For more information, visit the [Fuel Up to Play 60 website](#).

Fruit Tree Planting Foundation Grant

The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation will donate an orchard to community garden sites, public schools, parks, neighborhoods, and other qualified sites across the country that will use their trees for a charitable purpose. This grant has a rolling deadline, so apply at any time. For more information, please visit [The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation website](#).

Farm to School and Community

FOOD SYSTEMS COORDINATORS BY REGION:

Northwest

Christina Walmer
(850) 475-5230 | cbwalmer@ufl.edu

Tiffany Torres
(850) 606-5233 | tiffany.torres@ufl.edu

Northeast

Judy Dampier
(352) 486-5131 | mullanju@ufl.edu

Travis Mitchell
(352) 273-4783 | tmitch@ufl.edu

Central

Caitlyn Glattig
(407) 254-9226 | cglattig@ufl.edu

South Central

Malory Foster
(727) 342-0805 | maloryrfoster@ufl.edu

Allyson BeCraft
(941) 861-9820 | abecraft@ufl.edu

South

Beth Owens
(954) 577-6385 | balexis@ufl.edu

STATE TEAM

David Campbell, State Food Systems Coordinator
(352) 273-3510 | campbell@ufl.edu

*For the most current list of Food Systems Coordinators by region, please contact State Food Systems Coordinator, David Campbell.

UPCOMING UF/IFAS EXTENSION EVENTS ACROSS THE STATE

Northwest:

So You Want to Be a Farmer?

Workshop Series

March 7, 6:00-7:30pm EST, Defuniak Springs

April 4, 6:00-7:30pm EST, Marianna

May 2, 6:00-7:30pm EST, Quincy

[Registration and more information here.](#)

Northeast:

Starting a Successful Hydroponic Business

March 13-14 and March 17-18, 8am-5pm, Live Oak

[Registration and more information here.](#)

Central:

2017 Bee College

March 10-11, 8am-6pm, St. Augustine

[Registration and more information here.](#)

South Central:

Rainwater Harvesting and Microplastics Workshop

March 11 from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM, Largo

[Registration and more information here.](#)

Compost, Microirrigation and Rainwater Workshop

April 29, 8:30-11:30am, Seffner

[Registration and more information here.](#)

Introduction to Beekeeping Course

Weekly March 4-25, 9am-4pm, North Fort Myers

[Registration and more information here.](#)

South:

Everglades Research and Education Center (EREC) Open House

April 6, 8:00-1:00pm, Belle Glade

[Registration and more information here](#)

UF | IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



grow • shop • cook • eat

Family Nutrition Program

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact 1-866-762-2237. TTY/TTD/FRS dial 711. This material was funded by the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—SNAP. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.