

Sourcing seeds, plants & growing equipment for your school

It is possible, through a little effort, to get most of what you may need for a school food growing project for free or with very little funds. Below are some ideas you may wish to consider:-

- **Ask parents for a seed amnesty.** There are often many packets of seeds lying unused in people's houses. Even if out of date they may be still viable - try to germinate a few on a wet paper towel left in a warm place as an experiment.
- **Send out a list of the plants you want to grow from seed.** A single packet of seeds is a small donation for your food growing project. Being specific also means you get what you really want!
- **Some plants can be divided or grown from cuttings.** Ask parents to help by providing a division or some cuttings of plants they may have in their gardens. This is a free way to gather lots of new additions to your garden.
- **Hold a seed and plant swap day.** This is a great way to highlight your food growing project and can be part of a school farmers market or other festival. Each person swapping gives a plant/seed donation to the school.
- **Ask parents for a tool amnesty.** Parents may have a lot of tools and other gardening equipment which is no longer used. Make sure to ask they only donate items which are safe to use.
- **Sponsor a fruit tree.** A nicer way to ask for a donation and parents know where their money is being spent. Create labels made by pupils to show who donated each tree. You can use this same principle for plants, tools, raised beds or even a poly-tunnel!
- **Use Freecycle, Gumtree and local adverts.** There are often items being given away locally in Freecycle or shop windows or put your own 'Wanted' advertisement in them.
- **Reduce, Recycle, Reuse.** There are lots of items in schools perfect as containers and pots for growing seeds in - you do not need to buy expensive new items from Garden Centres. What about using recycling boxes from your local council, or old clean bins? Or ask for manure from your local stables for compost.
- **Contact local Scaffold businesses for timber.** Scaffold companies have to replace their boards every few years and may keep some for you to make raised beds with.

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- **Compost!** Schools have lots of green waste from school meals and sandwiches as well as free school fruit. Mix this with used paper towels, ripped up cardboard, pet bedding and even pencil sharpening's to create your own compost.
- **Ask local businesses for help.** There are lots of local businesses from builder's merchants who have timber and soil, to other organisations who may like to run a team building event and help your school to build its garden. Sometimes they never get asked and would love to help! Check your local Volunteer Centre www.volunteering.org.uk/where-do-i-start for possible corporate volunteer projects.
- **Use your school council and PTA.** All of the above ideas take time and dedication so it is important to get help! This is the time to create a Garden Group of interested children, parents, grandparents, teachers, school support staff, governors and members of your local community. They can help you plan, look for resources and look after the school garden during holidays. By being resourceful in gathering materials the food growing project also becomes more valued and involved by your school community.

Food Growing Schools: London

For more school food growing advice and resources visit: www.foodgrowingschools.org

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