

Community Gardens & Food-Literacy Partnerships

FOR: School district & community partners • **PARTNERS:** parks, NGOs, health dept, extension • **SDGs:** 2 • 3 • 11 • 12

One-sentence summary. Pair school/community gardens with food-literacy lessons and produce-sharing—improving access to fruits/vegetables and food skills while building neighborhood ties.

Why it matters

Peer-reviewed reviews link community gardening with higher fruit/vegetable intake and psychosocial benefits. Schools are ideal hubs: they bring land, students, and steady volunteers. Partnerships with local composters and food banks amplify impact.

Evidence (key points)

- Systematic reviews find community gardening associated with increased fruit/veg intake and other benefits (BMC Public Health, 2022).
- U.S. research links garden participation to higher vegetable intake and food agency.
- Combining gardening with nutrition education and tasting days boosts effects and equity.

Options considered

Option	What it looks like	Pros	Cons
Ad hoc garden beds	Volunteer-built beds; no curriculum	Low cost; quick start	Uneven upkeep; low participation
Garden + food-literacy partnership	MOUs with NGOs; harvest tasting; family workshops	Higher participation; measurable diet shifts	Coordination and scheduling needed
Garden + cafeteria loop	On-site compost; cafeteria taste tests; share table; donations	Connects waste reduction to food literacy; community ties	Requires food-safety protocols and staff time

Alt text: Table compares ad hoc gardens, garden+education, and garden+cafeteria loop.

Recommendations

- 1) Form a garden coalition with an NGO partner. Steps: MOU covering land, volunteers, produce policy, and curriculum alignment.
- 2) Integrate food-literacy modules. Steps: seasonal lessons (soil, seeds, cooking skills), tasting days, and student recipe cards.
- 3) Close the loop. Steps: compost cafeteria scraps (see compost brief), use compost in beds, track yields, and host family harvest days.

Local data & resources: Philadelphia

- [Nature Conservancy — Philadelphia Urban Heat Map](#)
- [PHS — Community gardens network & City Harvest](#)
- [FarmPhilly — Community Composting \(city program\)](#)

How we'll measure success

- Participants reporting ≥ 1 extra daily serving of fruit/veg: +20–30%
- Garden volunteer hours/month: trend up
- Food waste diverted to compost: lbs/semester
- Family workshop attendance: count/quarter

Credits & sources (clickable)

- [BMC Public Health — Community gardens & diet outcomes \(systematic review, 2022\)](#)
- [NIH/PMC — Community gardening increases vegetable intake \(review, 2023\)](#)
- [American Journal of Health Promotion — Garden participation & F/V intake \(classic study\)](#)