



School:

Your Name:

Today's Date: / /

☐ Check if this is the school's **first time** using tool.

The DIG in Schools tool is designed to help schools grow and sustain their garden programs. Each of the 50 items is an idea for how to integrate the garden more fully into the school community. Schools can use the tool to **rate their current garden program**, **select items to work on**, and **track growth over time**.

- Some items are low-cost and easy to do, while other ideas can involve more time and resources.
- Not all items are appropriate for all schools. Schools can choose ideas that work well for their unique setting.
- Gardens change over time. The tool should give you a sense of **how the current garden program functions**.

INSTRUCTIONS

- DETERMINE WHO HAS THE INFORMATION YOU NEED TO COMPLETE THIS TOOL. **Decide how you will complete the tool** (ex., as a group, with students, etc.), and schedule a time to connect with the right people!
- RATE EACH ITEM. Is it **Not in Place Right Now (0)**, **Partly in Place Right Now (1)**, or **Fully in Place Right Now (2)**? Some items may be N/A. It's okay to use your intuition. Need help? Use the Dig in Schools Rating Guide. And **take notes** about your ratings!
- ADD UP YOUR RATINGS. If more than one person completed the tool, **come to consensus by talking**. Then tally the section and total scores! How integrated is your school garden program?
- DISCUSS THE TOOL RESULTS WITH YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY. What are your program's strengths? Where would you most like to grow your program? **Decide which items your school will address**. The DIG in Schools action plan template can help!

QUESTIONS TO GET STARTED

Answer these questions first to guide how you complete the DIG in Schools tool. Groups should come to a consensus.

- Which of the below best describes your school garden program **at this point in time**?
 - Our garden program is **just getting started**. **Hot Tip: Focus on JUST the priority items with ! icons.**
 - Our garden program has been around for a while, **operating pretty consistently over time**.
 - Our garden program has been around for a while and is **now expanding**.
 - Our garden program has been around for a while, but it is **currently not very active** or dormant.
 - Our garden program is **currently being revitalized** after a dormant period.
- Who is completing the DIG in Schools tool? Why?
- For groups, how will you finalize your results? Will one person or the group make the final decisions? Why?

When you rate items, remember to **answer based on where your garden program is RIGHT NOW**, not where you would like the garden to be or where it has been.

0 - Not in Place or Generally Not Done, 1 - Partly in Place or Sometimes Done, 2 - Fully in Place or Usually Done



RESOURCES & SUPPORT

Rating
0, 1, or 2

- ! 1. The school has at least one very active garden person, like a garden champion or designated leader.....
2. New garden leaders or champions (paid or volunteer) are regularly identified to ensure continuity.....
3. A school or district group of at least 3 people meets regularly to discuss the garden program.....
4. The school is CURRENTLY connected to at least one garden support system (ex., Farm to School Network) that offers opportunities to network with others, access resources, and/or learn.....
5. The school is CURRENTLY connected to at least one local organization or person (ex., AZ Health Zone, AmeriCorps, Master Gardeners) for technical assistance with the school's garden program. ☐ N/A.....
- ! 6. The school has adequate information about how to fund garden program activities.....
7. The school has adequate funding for this year's planned garden program activities.....
- ! 8. The school administration (ex., Principal) provides staff with DEDICATED TIME for planning, implementing, and/or evaluating the school garden program (ex., building or tending the garden, teaching lessons).....
9. Teachers and/or other staff receive gardening education and training (ex., core curricula, how to's).....
10. The school has enough supplies for all students in the garden AT THE SAME TIME to participate.....
11. The school administration actively promotes the school's garden program (ex., in newsletters or talks)....
12. The Local Wellness Policy states that schools have a garden program. (Note: check the district or school Local Wellness Policy.).....
- ! 13. The school has a GARDEN PROGRAM GUIDE IN HARDCOPY AND/OR ELECTRONIC FORM that includes: [Check all that apply and follow scoring instructions in the box.].....
 - ☐ The garden program's vision & goals
 - ☐ A budget plan for obtaining funding & supplies
 - ☐ The garden's design/layout
 - ☐ The intended use(s) for the garden
 - ☐ A written garden maintenance plan
 - ☐ A written plan for integrating the garden into the student experience (ex., curricula, growing)
 - ☐ A written plan for integrating the garden into the broader school community (ex., harvest events)
 - ☐ A written succession plan to address turnover or handoffs of garden-related staff

HOW TO SCORE ITEM #13

0 - No hardcopy or electronic guide

1 - Guide has 1-4 components

2 - Guide has 5 or more components

Resources & Support Subtotal

(add up all 1s and 2s)

NOTES (why you rated this way, more information, ideas)



THE GARDEN

Rating

0, 1, or 2

- ! 1. The school has at least one type of garden (ex., raised bed, in ground, hydroponic, pollinator).....
- ! 2. The school has all of the tools and materials needed to build and/or maintain the garden (ex., lumber, soil, shade cloth, shovels, hoses, any needed power supply, water source).....
- ! 3. The school has a suitable garden space for all intended use(s), like growing and teaching.....
- ! 4. The garden area has enough natural (or artificial) lighting and shade for the intended use(s).....
- ! 5. The watering system is suitable for the garden type, school maintenance capacity, and school goals.....
- ! 6. The garden has sufficient drainage. ☐ N/A (ex., hydroponic or flood crop).....
7. The watering system is checked regularly by a designated person or group.....
8. The watering system addresses water scarcity in dry climates like the desert (ex., using rainwater harvesting or hydroponics). ☐ N/A (not a dry/arid climate).....
9. The soil (or water, if hydroponic) receives nutrients/soil amendments, as needed.....
10. Pest management (ex., fencing, safe spraying) reduces the impact of insects, rodents, etc. ☐ N/A.....
11. The garden is modified, as needed, in response to planned and unplanned environmental changes (ex., weather, new pests, school interest in new uses).....
12. The garden has sufficient, easy-to-access storage for tools, seeds, and other supplies.....
13. Everyone responsible for the garden has full access to it (ex., has gate or shed keys).....
14. When active, the garden is regularly tended (ex., watered, checked for pests) by a DESIGNATED person or group. *Note: Many gardens are seasonally dormant. Answer for active seasons, only.*.....
15. The garden is accessible to adults and students with physical mobility impairments (ex., people using wheelchairs can access and participate in the garden similar to other people.).....
16. The garden space is inviting and comfortable (ex., painted signs, shaded benches, work tables).....
- ! 17. The garden space has been assessed for safety, including child-safe pest control and tools, no vagrancy (ex. fencing prevents strangers from entering), and low risk of falling/slipping.....
18. Crops are harvested for specific uses (ex., tasting, selling, making art, serving, food pantries).....
19. Crops are grown in accordance with Arizona's [food safety guidelines](#) for any foods tasted or consumed. *Note: Click the Arizona Department of Health Services link to learn more.* ☐ N/A.....

The Garden Subtotal

(add up all 1s and 2s)

NOTES (why you rated this way, more information, ideas)



STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Rating

0, 1, or 2

1. Students are actively involved in garden planning and/or management (ex., what is grown, composting).....
- ! 2. Students help create and/or maintain some aspect of the PHYSICAL garden (ex., designing an eco-friendly garden, building beds, doing chores like watering or weeding) on a regular basis.....
3. All students receive or will receive garden-related EDUCATION (i.e., lessons) sometime this school year.....
4. Student gardening activities are developmentally appropriate (ex., for different ages, for those with individualized education plans). *Note: Ask someone familiar with this.* ☐ N/A (no current activities).....
5. Gardening activities often engage students in the FULL life cycle of a crop: prep, plant, grow, harvest.....
6. Some regular gardening activities (ex., the curriculum, tasting events) include learning about NUTRITION....
7. Some regular gardening activities (ex., lessons, building, harvesting) encourage students to BE ACTIVE.....
8. Most or all gardening activities with students promote TOTAL WELLBEING (ex., by encouraging students to spend time outdoors, practice sensory awareness, connect with nature and/or other people, etc.).....
9. Students often spend time in the garden outside of structured lessons.....
10. Gardening activities with students often build from their prior grade level activities.....

Student Experience Subtotal

(add up all 1s and 2s)



CULTURE & COMMUNITY

Rating

0, 1, or 2

- ! 1. People from diverse groups like these participate in ongoing school garden activities:.....
 - Classroom teachers & specialists (ex., PE teacher, nurse)
 - School maintenance/facilities staff
 - School or district administrators
 - Other school staff (ex., front desk, bus drivers)
 - Families of students
 - Local volunteers (ex., local gardeners, elders, church groups)
 - Community partners (ex., tribal organizations, the AZ Health Zone, local businesses, AmeriCorps)
2. The school garden program coordinates its efforts with other school priorities (ex., facilities plans, contracted pest or weed management, other administrator priorities). ☐ N/A.....
3. Garden-related activities with the broader school community occur at least annually (ex., community engagement days, building or planting days, harvest festivals, planning sessions).....
4. The school uses effective communication methods (ex., newsletters, email, social media, conferences, multi-language) to invite school community members to gardening activities and/or events.....
5. Gardening is a part of the school's identity/organizational culture.....
6. The school garden program ENGAGES WITH THE COMMUNITY TO LEARN about gardening practices that reflect local culture (ex., learning about traditional vegetables that families serve, asking a local grower about native plants or using ollas for irrigation). *Note: Click the link to learn more about local culture, which can include the traditions, knowledge, practices, and/or preferences of the local community*.....
7. At least some garden activities ACTUALLY INTEGRATE local cultural practices and/or preferences. *Note: Click the link for examples of local culture*.....
8. Beyond teacher-student activities, at least some garden activities connect different groups of people to each other (ex., teachers with families, younger with older students, school staff with elders).....

HOW TO SCORE ITEM #1

0 - Only one of these groups is involved

1 - Some of these groups are involved

2 - Many of these groups are involved

Culture & Community Subtotal

(add up all 1s and 2s)

NOTES (why you rated this way, more information, ideas)

SECTION & OVERALL TOTALS

RESOURCES & SUPPORT

of 26 =

%

THE GARDEN

of 38 =

%

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

of 20 =

%

CULTURE & COMMUNITY

of 16 =

%

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Which sections stand out to you as already thriving?

Which sections are you interested in developing more?

Add up the sections → TOTAL

of 100*

*Not Applicable (N/A) items make total possible points lower and total % scores higher. For the purposes of using the DIG in Schools tool, you do not need to worry about adjusting your points! This tool and the points are simply a broad guide to help you explore sections that you feel are already strong and sections where you feel you may want to focus your efforts! The total and the scale below can also help you to better understand your school garden's current level of integration.

HOW INTEGRATED IS YOUR SCHOOL GARDEN?

Note: These broad ranges for levels of integration naturally account for N/A items.



0-33

SPROUTING

Your garden is getting started! How can you use these results to progress?



34-66

GROWING

Your garden is moderately integrated already! How can you build on these strengths?



67-100

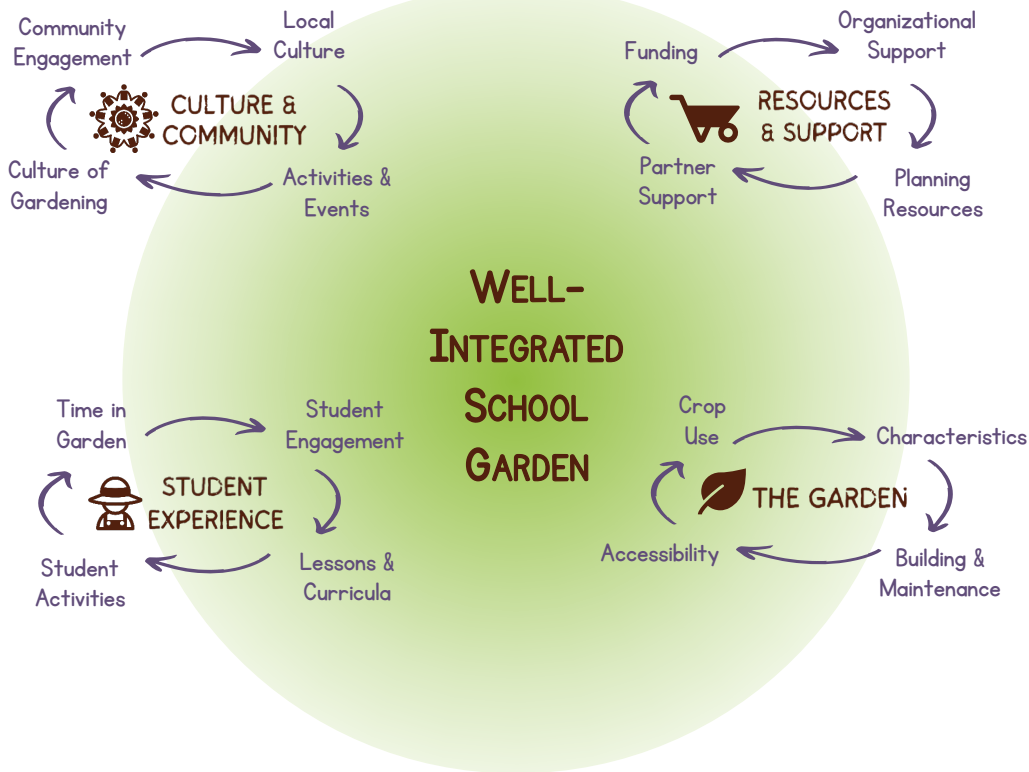
THRIVING

Your garden is well-integrated! Use these results to celebrate and keep flourishing!

WHAT IS A WELL-INTEGRATED SCHOOL GARDEN?

A well-integrated school garden ([Burt et al., 2017](#)): “is maintained...at or near a school, is primarily used as a learning environment to create meaningful experiences for students, is a valued part of the school’s culture, and is sustained over time.”

HOW DO THE DIG IN SCHOOLS TOOL SECTIONS WORK TOGETHER FOR AN INTEGRATED GARDEN?



WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR DEVELOPING **YOUR** INTEGRATED SCHOOL GARDEN PROGRAM?

Are there certain DIG in Schools items or sections that are especially important to members of your school community? Are there other things you would like to pursue that are not covered in this tool?