



# How to Secure Funding for an ASG Grow Kit For Your School Garden Program

There are many ways to acquire the materials and funds to start up or sustain a school garden. Successful kids' gardening programs frequently incorporate several strategies. Soliciting donations of materials, such as an Adopt a School Garden® (ASG) **Grow Kit**, within your community may be a good way to add to an existing project, while grant funding may be necessary to launch a new garden project. The suggestions below can help you secure program support at any level.

## Budgets

When making a request for funding it is important to include a budget — all donors want to know how you will spend their money. If you begin by estimating the costs for the entire project and preparing a realistic budget, you'll have a good fundraising target and a better sense of whether local solicitation or grant writing will best meet your needs. You may be able to support a small garden project with a donation of \$200, whereas a new garden with site renovations may require a major grant. A budget for an **ASG Grow Kit** may vary from \$150 to \$1,000 or more, depending on your overall vision.

## Funding Sources

To earmark funds for an **ASG Grow Kit**, first consider potential sources within your school. Request an annual allocation from the school budget or PTO funds. If the garden program is a vital part of the school infrastructure; is actively championed by faculty, staff, volunteers, and kids; and features permanent structures, such as fences and sheds, you are more likely to receive such funding. Emphasize the connections between the garden and curriculum, detailing how the garden program addresses local, state, and national standards and frameworks.

To find sources of educational funds available in your area, talk with your principal, subject-area coordinators, or district grant writer. Ask if there are mini-grants or other funds available through your district. Local corporations (including utility companies), community foundations, and public education foundations may also offer grants for educational programs and materials.

## Soliciting Donations

Soliciting donations from local groups and businesses is more than a way of obtaining needed money and materials such as an **ASG Grow Kit**. It serves to publicize and develop support for your program and to actively involve the community in championing education. Here are some tips for requesting donations:

- Have a specific plan and set of needs in mind before approaching potential donors. For instance, create a list of the **ASG Grow Kit(s)** you'd like from each donor.
- Businesses receive requests for donations all the time, so be professional, organized, and specific. Ask for only appropriate amounts of cash or materials. Explain that a funder may order an **ASG Grow Kit** for you online at [www.garden.org/asg](http://www.garden.org/asg), or provide funds for the school to purchase the kit.
- Meet with potential donors in person, if possible.
- Know the tax status of your school or organization and the name businesses should use when making out checks.
- Create project folders you can leave with each potential donor. This folder will show that your effort is well organized and that the program has the full support of the school. This presentation doesn't need to be flashy but should include the following: endorsement letter from an administrator or program director, project description, goals and objectives, rationale, garden plan, list of people who support the project, photos or students' quotes or drawings.
- Celebrate and acknowledge your donors in word and print. This might include student-produced certificates, banners, press releases, and so on.

## Tips for Creating a Project Folder

In addition to letters of support, local businesses may find the following information useful in determining whether to donate funds or materials to your program. If you are writing a grant you will definitely need this information:

- a) goals
- b) objectives (student outcomes)
- c) rationale
- d) project description
- e) evaluation and how the project will meet learning standards

Your proposal should convey enthusiasm, while also stressing the excellent organization and broad base of the gardening program. You may be asked for documentation of strong leadership, community support, and the sustainability of your program. Emphasize why your project is unique and worthy of funding. Create a vivid image by describing what educators and students will actually do and detailing the outcomes for students, educators, and the community.

Follow these cardinal rules for making solicitations:

- Make requests as short as possible. Real people have to read each proposal, so be concise.
- Make simple, straightforward requests. Do not assume complexity adds credibility.
- Avoid acronyms and professional jargon, small type or hard-to-read fonts, and irrelevant appendix materials.
- Show appreciation when your organization receives a donation!
- Know when to quit. If rejected, it is appropriate to ask why, but do it in a way that leaves a good impression.
- Be a good non-winner. Do not argue with a business representative. Try again later with another project.

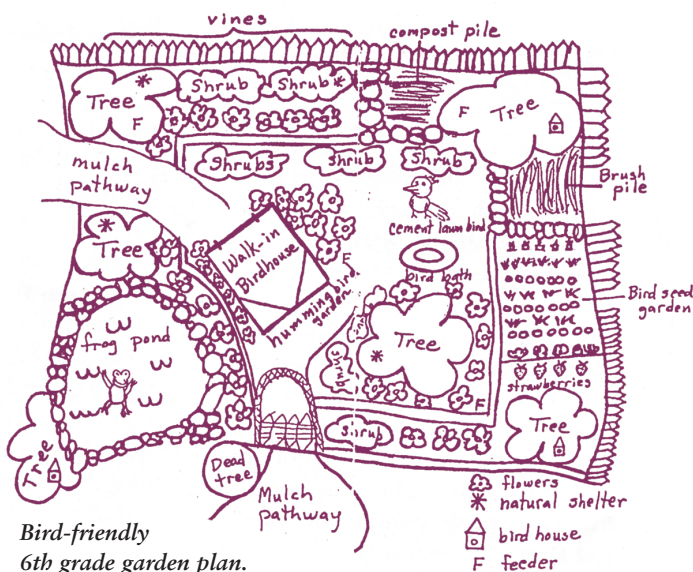
## Highlights from Successful Grants

As you build your project folder and tailor your proposal to your unique classroom or school situation, we hope you'll draw on the following excerpts from successful grant applications, shared by educators across the country. Feel free to quote the excerpts as you make your case.

### A) GOALS

#### • EMPHASIZING THE HANDS-ON FOCUS...

☼ “As part of our curriculum, we study living and nonliving things in a child’s environment. A garden will allow me to integrate “hands-on” learning to help my students master science concepts and process skills. My first-grade



students benefit tremendously from experiencing and doing. This fun living laboratory will be a constant motivator. It will also help my students to connect today’s pressing environmental concerns to curricular lessons in science; promote personal growth; and demonstrate the value of responsibility, cooperation, and group problem solving.”



☼ “We believe science is best taught through a hands-on approach.

Gardening, the ultimate hands-on activity, provides countless opportunities for scientific observation and practical application of principles. Students experience first-hand the wonders of nature. In planting and maintaining their garden, they see the impact of external stimuli. The garden teaches students, among other things, about conservation techniques while cultivating and caring for their plants.”

### B) OBJECTIVES & STUDENT OUTCOMES

☼ “As a result of this project, my students will exhibit:

- improved observational skills, knowledge of scientific method;
- improved written language and reading skills;
- improved understanding of applied mathematics (measurement, time, calendar, etc.);
- improved attitudes — attending the Resource Room will be a privilege and an exciting experience;
- an interest in plants and gardening that could become a lifelong avocation.”

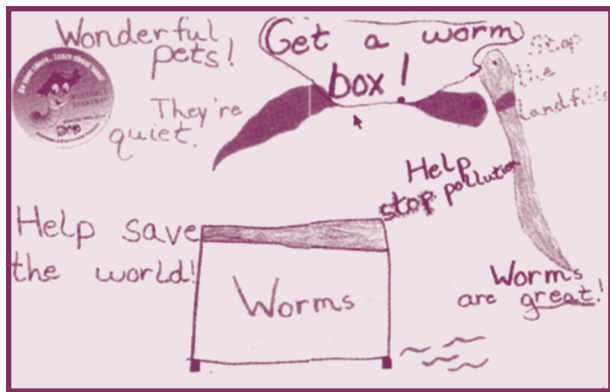
☼ “The students will:

- develop analytical skills in order to investigate and analyze life cycles;
- use a variety of scientific skills (inference, prediction, observation, controlling variables) in order to conduct the investigation;
- participate in cooperative learning;
- have knowledge of the importance of life;
- grow plants successfully;
- express curiosity about the world;
- have knowledge of their place and responsibility in the ecological structure;
- address the problem of hunger, evaluate the situation, and be part of the solution.”

### C) RATIONALE FOR USING SCHOOL GARDENS AS TEACHING TOOLS

#### • GROWLAB DEFINED...

☼ “The National Gardening Association, with funding from the National Science Foundation, developed the GrowLab Indoor Garden which, along with the resource



guides, provides hands-on, inquiry-based learning of process skills and core concepts. The GrowLab enables children to grow vegetables, flowers, and herbs through entire life cycles in an average of 10 weeks. It is a full gardening system with adjustable lighting, programmable timer, climate control tent, capillary watering mat, and easy-to-follow directions and adaptable lesson plans that integrate math, science, language arts, social studies, health, and environmental topics for grades K-8.”

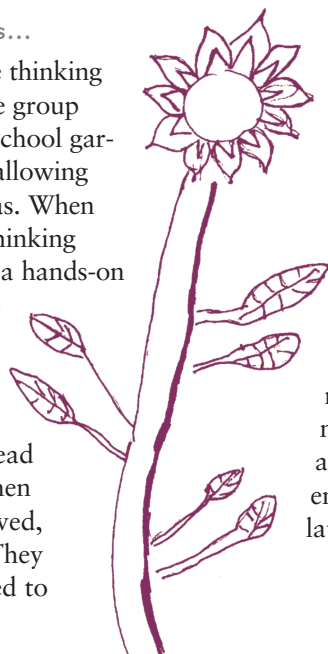
• FROM A SCHOOL IN AN ECONOMICALLY DEPRESSED COMMUNITY...

✿ “Ours is a relatively low socio-economic community with few enrichment experiences. For many students, the time spent at school is the most meaningful and rewarding part of their day, so it needs to be exciting and enriching. Gardening serves this purpose and also integrates many of our district’s conceptual objectives. How exciting and rewarding to take ownership of a developing plant and watch it complete its growth cycle, to learn about its history, to find out where in the world it grows, to predict when it will blossom, to create a poem about its development! Plant-based education is hands-on learning that involves higher-level thinking skills.”

• GARDENS MEETING CURRICULUM GOALS...

✿ “Our major science goal is to promote thinking and problem-solving skills. We encourage group cooperation in solving real problems. A school garden will help us reinforce these skills by allowing students to form hypotheses and test ideas. When knowledge is applied in real situations, thinking skills are reinforced. Gardening provides a hands-on experience and a direct connection to the earth.”

✿ “Any academic concept generates more enthusiasm when we introduce it in the context of our garden. Students read about plants, worms, and pollinators, then write about what they’ve learned, observed, and hypothesized about plant growth. They measure and solve math problems related to



our garden, and draw plans of what crops to plant in which part of the garden. The garden provides a real-world, hands-on bridge between abstract academic concepts and students’ real life experiences. Teachers are excited to find more ways to incorporate the garden context in our academic curricula. “

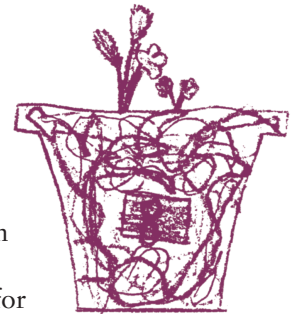
D) PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

✿ “My garden calendar begins in September when we assemble our GrowLab Indoor Garden, write letters to seed companies, and start houseplants for Thanksgiving gifts. In October, we conduct germination experiments, sow long-season crops for our Valentine’s Day salad party, grow sprouts for tasting, and discuss World Food Day. In November, we start growth charts and records and begin fertilizer experiments. In December, we sow more seeds for the salad party and prepare final fertilizer experiment reports. In January, we start marigolds for Mother’s Day gifts, plant “mystery” seeds, begin a nutrition unit, study pollination, and hand-pollinate cucumbers. In February, we design and produce menus for and hold our salad party. In March, we start seedlings for our outdoor garden, then in April, transplant them and begin a unit on water cycles. We end in May with a spring plant sale.”

✿ “We enhance geography by growing, sampling, and mapping foods from different regions, helping students to understand the economic impact agriculture has on the world. In math we regulate temperature, nutrients, and water; use graphs to chart and compare each plant’s growth; and estimate daily growth, the number of plants that germinate, and days to germination.

We broaden language and communication skills with vocabulary related to gardening, writing letters, and exchanging results with other gardening classrooms. Students record data in journals, and write a play dramatizing the life of a plant. To connect gardening to the arts we make leaf rubbings, press flowers, paint murals, and play music to affect plant growth. We also explore color and arrangement while designing our indoor and outdoor gardens.

Science includes studying food groups and the vitamins derived from certain plants. Students experiment with plants under different conditions to learn about basic plant needs, and explore compelling environmental problems such as acid rain with simulations in our indoor laboratory.”



## E) EVALUATIONS

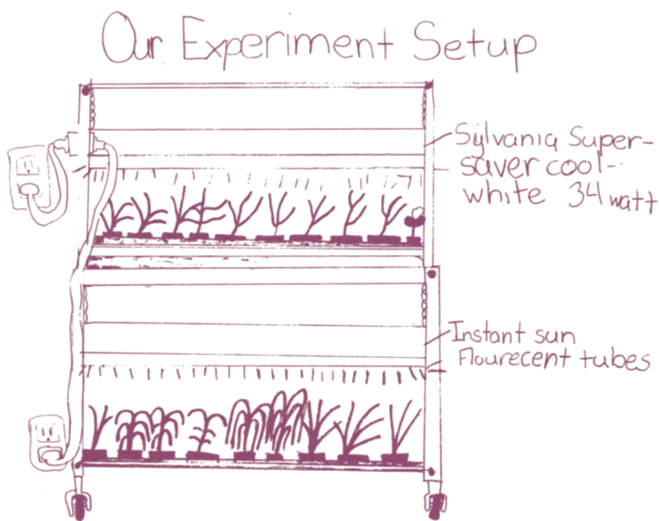
✿ “The garden program recognizes that paper and pencil tests have their limitations when assessing learning from an inquiry-oriented approach. We will develop alternative assessment methods to measure changes in student behavior. Student portfolios, which include journal entries, investigative reports, drawings, graphs, and charts, will help to assess gains over time. We will use the “making connections” phase of the inquiry teaching cycle to assess student understandings of new contexts. Our project will cumulate with a narrative report and photographic essay.”

✿ “We will use a range of tools to assess students’ progress, including: journals, observations of hands-on activities with checklists, students’ ability to teach others, observations and reports of cooperative learning groups, feedback from parents, dramatizations, and student evaluations of their own plants and work.”

### How Are Young Minds Growing?

Seeing often *is* believing. Photos and anecdotes that convey a strong image of your garden program’s benefits can help a potential donor appreciate its importance. A wealth of evaluative evidence exists demonstrating that students do learn important concepts and develop positive attitudes toward themselves, their studies, and the environment, but your own anecdotes, student art, and photos convey the strongest image of how your garden program helps young minds grow. Read on for some sample excerpts from your colleagues...

- ✿ “The garden program really unites students. It doesn’t matter that they came from different areas or that their skin color is different; everyone’s hands are the same color — dirty!”
- ✿ “Our GrowLab Indoor Garden is the bright centerpiece of our classroom. It motivates students to experience the concepts — not just talk about them.”



- ✿ “We study science, math, language arts, and civic engagement in the garden. Activities range from composting and insect identification to tracking weather and journaling. As a result, students are more involved in academic studies, more engaged with the natural world, and work better in teams.”
- ✿ “In our garden students’ confidence grows, their attitudes toward learning and school improve, and they develop a heightened awareness of environmental issues. They complete projects on time, practice public speaking, work as a team, and are motivated to do well in school.”
- ✿ “Students have absolute enthusiasm for their plant explorations and a zest for science, questioning, and initiating new projects that I haven’t seen before.”
- ✿ “Our gardening program is a tool of change, causing a paradigm shift in the way students view their place in the community and on earth. They learn to think critically about their food choices, food security, local and global environmental issues, the importance of cultural diversity, and the effect of their actions. They gain a better understanding and awareness of the world, and see themselves as responsible citizens who can actively improve their lives.”
- ✿ “Students are ALWAYS willing to try a new vegetable if given the chance to try it in the garden!”
- ✿ “Learning about composting gives students a solid science foundation and a clear understanding of how important it is to take care of our planet. They have a greater respect for nature and a keen sensitivity about not wasting anything.”