

Growing School Gardening through 4-H Project Green Teacher

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INTRODUCTION

School gardening when used as a context for learning is a positive, research-based, educational tool with many benefits for participants. However; educators, afterschool personnel and others often do not know how to begin a school garden. This twelve week, two-hour a week series attempts to bridge that gap by focusing on topics such as grants, site selection, curriculum, growing techniques, behavior management, and more.



In a large metropolitan area where it is especially difficult for a 4-H Educator to personally bring 4-H enrichment programs to all of the youth in the county, engaging teachers through the use of a school garden curriculum series is a viable solution that also introduces 4-H and Ohio State University Extension to a wide range of participants.

The series also enables educators from 4-H, Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Family and Consumer Sciences to work as a team towards a common goal: school garden education and nutrition.

Finally, series presenters came from three primary areas: OSU Extension, local non-profits, and area schools.

Area teachers taught a third of the sessions.



Central Ohio teachers from School Gardens of Ohio (S-GO) helped to fine tune and teach the school garden educational series in the Fall of 2016. Participants in the first session experienced a tomato hornworm serving as a host for parasitic wasps. (Pictured are Jim Reding from Granville High School and Susan Hrenko from Worthington Schools at Waterman Farm).

4-H PROJECT GREEN TEACHER HISTORY

The series started as an offshoot of Franklin County OSU Extension's Annual School Garden Conference. Participants cited on evaluation forms that they needed more practical gardening experience. At first grant funding from the Ohio 4-H Foundation enabled teachers to attend the *Master Urban Farmer* series which met some of the stated needs, but was not a perfect fit as it was designed to be entrepreneurial in nature. A new program specific to school gardening was needed. The Franklin County 4-H Educators discussed a name, and came up with *Project Green Teacher* drawing on the word "project" because of similar verbiage in 4-H.

Prior to the winter of 2016 the series had been held in-house but, a sub-committee of the newly formed *School Gardens of Ohio*, with Extension at the helm, turned the series into a partnership program. The goal of *School Gardens of Ohio* or *S-Go*, is to increase school gardens in Ohio and make them a solid part of Ohio's culture. The group re-imagined the series with a complete school garden focus. Finally, in order to enable *Project Green Teacher* participants to hear many voices in the field, OSU Extension personnel, area school teachers and local non-profits developed and taught the curriculum.

Participants have rated the series highly on evaluation forms.

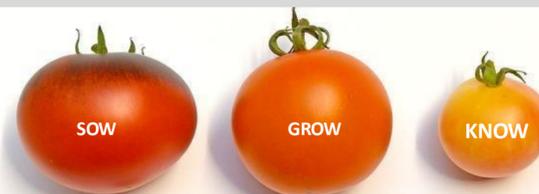


This was an extremely informative series. I learned so much valuable information, ideas and techniques that can be implemented in a school setting....I appreciated the opportunity to network with Master Gardeners and other gardens who operate in non-traditional settings or in the community. It was also great to learn of all the wonderful resources available in the greater Columbus area and through 4-H and Ohio State. A wonderful series with great resources and very enthusiastic presenters. (Quote from a participant on the evaluation form).

Series Topics:

Participants were required to attend 10 of the 12 sessions:

- **Session 1:** Sustainability and volunteer management, engaging stakeholders
- **Session 2:** Site selection, soil testing, soil quality, site preparation, behavior management, garden safety, insurance, vandalism
- **Session 3:** Selecting garden type (raised bed, container, in-ground, hydroponics, etc.); garden themes such as Three Sisters, pizza, heritage, pollinator, herb, etc.; planning the garden with activities that will engage youth in planning
- **Session 4:** Grant writing, funding, supplies
- **Session 5:** School Garden Conference



- **Session 6:** Basic information and activities about growing specific vegetables and other plants
- **Session 7:** Garden activities including germinating, transplanting, pruning, mulching, amending, composting, etc.
- **Session 8:** Soil and Water activities
- **Session 9:** Curriculum connections: finding lesson plans and aligning
- **Session 10:** Integrated pest management, pollinators, organic gardening
- **Session 11:** Harvesting lesson plans and activities, nutrition, cooking lesson plans using harvested produce; Farm to School
- **Session 12:** Season extension; presentation of certificates

Shown are the Fall 2014 Project Green Teachers.



RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Of the 32 participants, 25 completed the requirements of the series and the rest completed most of the requirements.
- Everyone received a participation certificate, *Project Green Teacher* sign and contact hour certificate.
- Participants completing evaluation forms rated the series positively, although some aspects of the series curriculum will need to be tweaked based on participant evaluations.
- On the evaluation form the majority of the participants indicated that before the series they were *slightly knowledgeable* about school gardening, but after completing the series they were *very knowledgeable*.
- Since the onset of the series, other Extension personnel and non-Extension educators have expressed an interest in replicating the series.

For additional information email: hogan.239@osu.edu.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- The Franklin County 4-H Educator is grateful for Scarlet and Gray Ag Day funds received to reimburse presenters for writing and presenting the series, and to reimburse participants a portion of the \$150 fee if they attended ten of the twelve sessions.
- Thanks also goes to Ohio State University Extension personnel who presented the series including Denise Ellsworth, Mary Griffith, Mike Hogan, Jacqueline Kowalski, Jenny Lobb, and Carol Smathers.
- Area teachers devoting their time to the series include: Susan Hrenko, Worthington Schools, Jim Reding, Granville Exempted Village Schools, and Cynthia Walters, Olentangy Local Schools and Slow Foods representative.
- Non-profit partners include Franklin Park Conservatory and Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District.