

The Gloucester Public Schools

Our mission is for all students to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners

Backyard Growers (BYG) School Garden Program

One of BYG's goals is to change children's attitudes and behaviors toward eating fresh vegetables. So far, we have achieved this by giving low to moderate income families backyard vegetable gardens, intensive garden training, and a volunteer garden mentor from the community to provide ongoing support. According to our 2012 survey data, BYG is meeting this goal—families report that as a result of their children's participation in the family garden, children eat more fresh vegetables and participate more in healthy meal planning and preparation. In order to deepen our impact and increase children's access to growing and fresh eating opportunities, BYG has launched a new, comprehensive garden program in all five of Gloucester's elementary schools based on our successful 2013 pilot.

Our 2014 goal is to establish a district-wide school garden program that exposes every elementary school child (over 1,300 students) to the experience of growing and eating fresh vegetables, and that builds the capacity of each school to maintain their school gardens for the long-term with limited financial and human resources. The program will result in well-managed, attractive school farms that become part of school culture and that increases children's understanding of how food is grown and food's relationship to the environment. BYG will use the following strategies to achieve our goals:

- Provide new staff support for the school garden program with a full-time FoodCorps Service Member.
- Provide a School Garden Plan Manual with specific goals, activities, and intended outcomes.
- Train and build School Garden Teams (comprised mainly of parent volunteers) at each school's garden plan with BYG support.
- Incorporate hands-on student participation in school gardens at least four times a year implemented by School Garden Teams, principals, and teachers based on the School Garden Plan and with BYG support.
 - April planting of the spring salad crop where every child in the district plants lettuce varieties.
 - Annual Salad Days where students harvest the salad greens and eat them as part of their school lunch program (In collaboration with Gloucester Food Service).
 - June planting of vegetable crops where every grade level plants a specific fall crop that requires little maintenance over the summer and that can be harvested upon the return to school.
 - Annual Fall Harvest Celebration where students harvest their crops, and eat them as part of their school lunch program (in collaboration with Gloucester Food Service).