

Feeding Student Mind and Body with a Vegetable Garden on Campus



Herb vegetable gardens are being cultivated throughout schools in Los Angeles County to nourish students and introduce them to organic gardening. Elementary schools are particularly taking advantage of the School Garden Program offered by Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works) to construct mini gardens on site. The County encourages schools to apply for this free program to adorn their campus.

The goal of Public Works is to introduce students to natural systems and get them interested in the environment through a garden to grow herbs, vegetables, and flowers. The children are the environmental stewards of tomorrow. The program started in 2013 and has served hundreds of schools. In 2020, the program was suspended due to Safer-At-Home Order in response to Covid-19. Since restarting in 2022, Public Works has seen considerable demand for construction of the gardens on campus from school administrators and teachers.

The program aims to especially reach schools in underserved communities but has served a diverse array of schools in different cities and areas. Generally, what is offered each school are two raised-beds (each 4 feet by 8 feet by 11 inches in dimension), soil, garden tools, plants, and compost bins. Schools could build the beds with the materials themselves or Public Works can have staff construct the garden with or without student participation. Staff also offers a free demonstration on worm composting that has been popular with young students.

The philosophy of the program is that the raised-bed garden presents a learning laboratory for students to learn science and social skills. They learn how to grow organic food and develop a healthy hobby that they could teach their parents at home.

To participate in the program or a free consultation, schools should contact Public Works at (626) 458-3516 or e-mail schoolgarden@pw.lacounty.gov. For more information, please visit <http://pw.lacounty.gov/epd/sg/school.cfm>.