

Summer Care for School Food Gardens

One of the most commonly cited obstacles for school food gardens is what to do when school is out for the summer. We must look for innovative solutions and turn this problem into an opportunity to involve the community to get more healthy local food and garden time for all of our children. We present below some ideas for you to explore how this could work in your community.

Reducing the Need for Summer Care: If summer care is a problem for you, consider the following options that can be used in various combinations:

- Install automated irrigation, preferably drip irrigation, so summer care-givers need only make sure it is working regularly.
- Plant crops that can be harvested before school ends and consider cover crops or low-maintenance crops for mid-summer.
- Use biointensive plant spacing techniques that require very little weeding since plant leaves grow to shade out weeds.
- Plant some crops in containers that can be taken home by staff or parents for summer care.
- Consider spring plantings as “starts” that can be taken home by kids to transplant into their gardens.

Summer Care Options: (again combinations of these options may work for you)

- See Kids Gardening’s [summer care page](#) for ideas to start.
- Put your school, garden project, and institutional volunteers to work (with supervision).
- Offer a portion of the garden to a community member in turn for summer care—see community garden wait lists for candidates.
- Hire a dedicated garden coordinator who can supervise volunteers at several garden sites.
- Diplomatically ask if school maintenance staff can help—you and they might be surprised that they like to help in the garden.
- Hire students to care for the garden—see if summer job programs can help you recruit and pay.
- Talk with college and summer kids programs throughout the community to see if your missions and needs overlap. (We see this as an untapped possibility.)
- What else might work for you???