



American Heart Association®

Teaching Gardens®

# Funding Your Garden

Donations of money, materials and services from community members, businesses and charitable organizations can greatly enhance your garden program. Fundraising could provide a garden aide's salary, cooking equipment or reference books. Even if you can't get district funds for your tool-shed or your dream greenhouse, there's a good chance you can get someone to donate many of the materials and much of the labor you need.

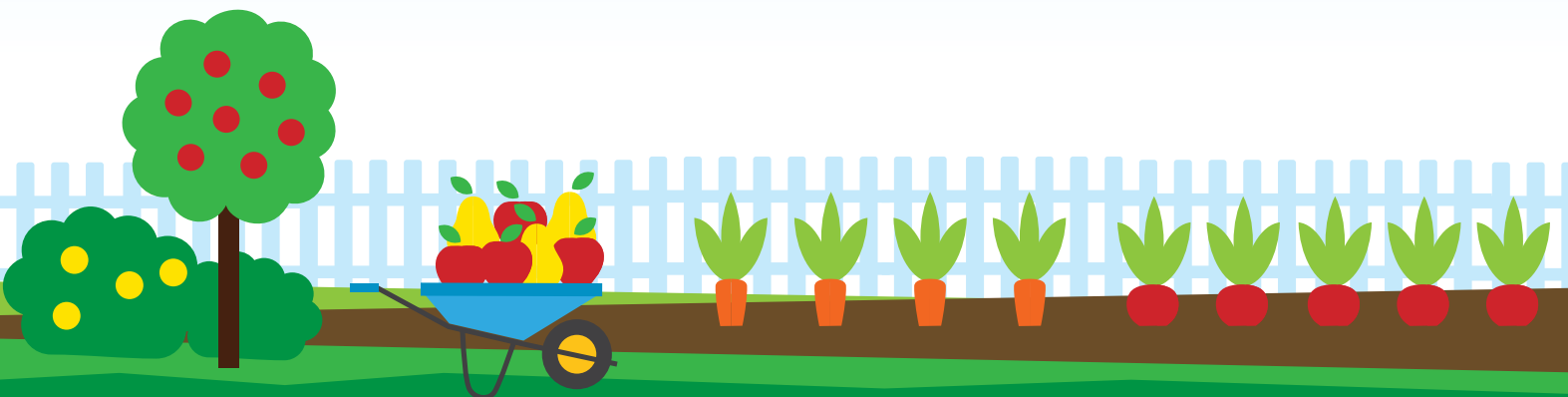
Don't hesitate to ask for help! Find other garden supporters to be your fundraising partners, and your students can help you tell your garden's story. Here are some strategies that schools and programs have found fruitful:

## Approaches to Soliciting Donations

For simple garden needs such as straw bales or empty six-pack containers, you may be able to make a few phone calls or email parents, local businesses, or community members. Larger projects call for a more formal approach.

Let's say you plan to build a greenhouse or irrigation system and need donated materials. Here's how to go about it.

Put together a specific project request. Include a project description, a list of needed materials, an estimated budget, a letter of support from your principal or director, photos of the site and samples of student work. Compile a list of businesses that could supply the materials or services you need. Make multiple copies of your project request so you can leave one at each business you approach. Would a business donation have some sort of tax benefit for the business? If so, consider adding that information to your proposal.





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Make an appointment to meet with the owners or managers. During the meeting, explain how your garden will help students learn. Show samples and images of the materials needed (or have a list handy) and ask whether the businesses can contribute any of the items. Don't get discouraged if your early attempts at fundraising are not successful. It can take time and perseverance.

Keep a record of all donations. After you receive your funds or supplies, be sure to respond to every donation, regardless of size, with a thank-you letter. Encourage your students to write illustrated, handwritten letters. Many schools acknowledge large donations with a more elaborate thank-you, such as a certificate presented at a special event at the school garden, or even a permanent fixture in the garden such as a sign or plaque recognizing donors.

Establish relationships with garden-related businesses. For example, encourage local nurseries to call you whenever they plan to discard plants, flats or seedlings. Stables and farms can be a regular source of straw or compost. One school found that even the local zoo was a valuable resource, providing manure for the compost pile.

Be sure to document your garden's progress with photos. A good set of photos can help with fundraising proposals — and be a useful historical record for your students.

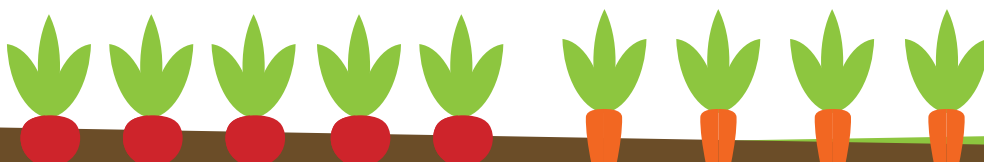
### Sources for Donations: Start Locally

Your best bet for school garden support is right in your own back yard. Draw on any district funds that may be available. Go to your community for help, including parents, neighborhood businesses and contacts of faculty and staff.

The type of help that's easiest to get is a donation of goods or services. For these "in-kind" contributions, consider such sources as:

- **Local businesses.** Reach out to nurseries, home supply stores, lumber companies, irrigation or bulldozing contractors, or any other business that has or does something you need.
- **Local farmers.** Parents or other school supporters in the farming business can be a valuable source of expertise, services (such as rototilling) and goods (seedlings, used tools or even historical farm equipment for a display).
- **Garden clubs.** Members can be sources of expertise, goods and services.
- **Individuals.** Parents and other community members might offer unexpected talents and resources.

Sometimes you need something a donor wants to give away. Be creative. One teacher reports visiting pumpkin lots after Halloween and asking to collect their decorative bales of straw for mulch.





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## Here are a few more ideas:

- Seek cash contributions from the following community sources: service groups such as the Lions or Kiwanis clubs, PTA or PTO school improvement funds and community foundation grants.
- Look for small grants from local sources. Research whether your city sponsors beautification projects. For example, several schools in San Jose, California, have received matching grants from a city program called “San Jose Beautiful.” Health-based organizations might have funds for a school garden used to teach nutrition.
- Consider contacting the large businesses and corporations in your area. Most large companies have a charitable arm or even a foundation that funds local projects. In addition, large companies (and even some small ones) have Adopt-a-School programs that you can modify to “Adopt-a-School-Garden.”
- Search for funding opportunities from larger nonprofits or corporations interested in addressing issues such as nutrition, food education and food insecurity. Many grants are available for nonprofit gardens. They may have restrictions, so make sure you are eligible before applying.
- Spread the word. Be sure to get the word out to the community about what your school garden needs. Try public service announcements in local media or student letters to local merchants.

## Federal and State Funds

Money is often available from state and federal sources. Your school district office should have a list of possibilities updated annually. In the past, these sources have provided school gardens with support:

- **U.S. Department of Education.** **Title I funds** are available to schools with low socioeconomic status. **Title II funds** for materials and staff development are administered by each state.
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.** Under the **Environmental Education Grants Program**, funds are awarded to support education projects that promote environmental awareness and stewardship.
- **Your state.** Check with your state’s environmental agency or commission or your state’s education agency for possible opportunities.

