

Top 10 (or 11) Phenology Garden Tips!

1) Plant during the correct season!

- 2) Assemble a Garden Team of students, staff, parents, teachers, etc. If the primary teacher/parent leaves, the garden should continue to be successfully used and maintained.
- 3) Get the facilities and maintenance personnel involved as early as possible. If they love the garden (less mowing and water!) they will ensure the garden succeeds over the long-term. Invite them to be on the Garden Team!
- 4) Think about maintenance, especially over school breaks. Is one person in charge of taking care of the plants? Can it be a group effort? Do you need a maintenance manual (watering regime, etc.)?
- 5) Pick the perfect spot for the garden. Should the garden be visible to the public? Is the location a popular thoroughfare? Will plants get trampled? Is there a water source nearby? Think about your audience. If the garden will primarily be used by the fourth grade class, but the garden is a 15 minute walk, will the teacher find the time to use the space?
- 6) Choose native plants that have easily recognizable phenophases for monitoring. When things get too complex, students will lose interest.
- 7) On Planting Day, demonstrate proper planting techniques with small groups of students. Explain any safety rules and expectations. Then, start planting in one corner of the project and move away with each subsequent group. Avoid trampling plants!
- 8) Use name badges on Planting Day for planting helpers and staff. Saying “hey you” to a student during planting isn’t nice or effective.
- 9) Designate a student or staff member to take photos during planting day. Photos are very important, but don't lose sight of the best part of Planting Day– connecting students with nature. Set up photo points to show how your garden has progressed over time.
- 10) Encourage the project to be the multi-disciplinary focus of your classroom: Send letters to the community, local newspapers, and the president to incorporate civics and writing. Draw pictures of the plants and the wildlife they will attract to incorporate art. Read about native cultural uses for your garden species to incorporate reading and social studies. Map your project using scales and measurements to incorporate math. Discuss the local climate and how it will impact your garden ecosystem to incorporate science. Get creative!
- 11) Use numbered stakes to identify each plant species in your garden (i.e. all elderberry individuals have a #1 stake). Make a plant key of the species in your garden that correlates to the numbered stakes. For future activities, build the plant key into field guide with species information like species and common names, animals that will be attracted, phenophases, shade tolerance, pollinators, native uses, etc.