

Overview:

The Child Nutrition Department is committed to reinforcing the connection between health and learning. We are working closely with our grant schools to create sustainable gardens that can be used for years to come.

**A Note from Larry Thompson,
Garden Coordinator**

"I hope everyone had a pleasant Holiday and are ready to start our new gardening year. I know I am and sincerely appreciate the opportunity to help with the Child Nutrition/Texas Department of Agricultural X3E Grant. Working with the school gardens has been a pleasure and honor. 2020 will be a great growing season."



Pinkerton Elementary

this issueWhat's Next for CISD Gardens **P.1**Growing Schedule **P.2**Garden Plot Preparation **P.3****January in the Gardens**

January is an important time of year for gardeners, especially in North Texas Zone 8A, beginning to prepare the soil, developing the garden plot plan and yes even starting seedlings in the greenhouse or windowsill of their home. January, in my opinion, sets the tone for the rest of the growing season.

With the assistance of Chef Helen and the Child Nutrition Department, we developed a winter and early spring gardening plot plan for the schools. The criteria used to develop the plot plan consisted of:

- 1) **Growing season** (Zone 8a) as recognized by Texas A&M Extension, estimated last frost date-March 16. (Although frost cloth might be needed during this time as a precaution)
- 2) **Growing season for the school**, end of school year is Thursday May 21, 2020. The school growing season limits the variety of what can be planted and harvested before school summer break. Most, not all, leave for the summer and have limited access to the gardens and the garden plots. For the majority of the schools, putting the bed to rest is the best option. We discussed this process during the training exercises. An example would be Town Center Elementary and Pinkerton Elementary. The beds were put to rest at the end of school year last year. At the beginning of this school year, there were limited, and manageable weeds growing in the beds and favorable soil testing analysis results from Texas A&M. This was in part due to preparing the beds for the returning school year in September. These schools could begin planting immediately with little maintenance to the beds.
- 3) **Chef Helen vegetable selection** for the cafeteria.
- 4) **Texas Agricultural Department Grant (X3E)** owner requirements.
- 5) **Garden Size Plots** (using Square Foot Gardening Methodology spacing and vegetable selection).



January

- Onions
- Potatoes

February

- Vegetable transplants
- Packaged Seeds
- Herbs

Future Utilization:

Coppell ISD Child Nutrition Department hopes to utilize crops within the cafeteria. These items may be added to our weekly salad bar, sampled with students, or used as our featured Farm Fresh Friday of the month.



The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just on the body, but the soul.

Alfred Austin

Garden Plot Growing Schedule

Onions and Potatoes are being delivered end of January at the Coppell Community Garden Annual Adopt-A-Plot meeting.

We will pick up the bulk delivery, separate for each school and deliver them the following week.

Each school will receive 2 bundles of **onions** in a mixture of Red, Yellow and White, each bundle typically has 50-75 onions per bundle.

Starter **potatoes** will also be delivered, each school will receive approximately 2-3 lbs. of potatoes in a variety of red, white and yellow potatoes.

Vegetable transplants (supplied by Coppell Greenhouse) scheduled for February.

Transplants: Kale, Spinach, Lettuce, Swiss Chard, Chinese Cabbage; there are approximately 25 transplants per variety per school. We will also provide seeds for these varieties.

Packaged Seeds: Carrot, Beet & Radish seeds for root crop will be provided, along with others.

Herbs: Cilantro, Dill, Basil, Parsley seeds will also be provided.



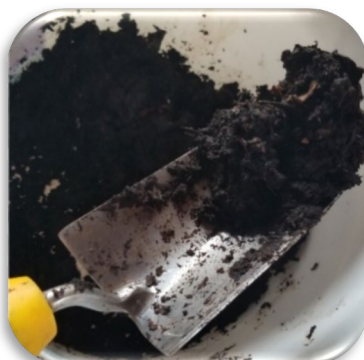
Garden Plot Preparation for Winter and Early Spring

1) **Review soil level in the beds:** top off the beds with the following amendment recommendations:

- Compost—preferably from the Shepard Bins provided. Good, well-finished compost is the sustainable material in any garden. The following ingredients may not be needed or limited if the school has a well-developed compost program:
 - Kellogg, Black Kow, Cotton Burr, Organic Fertilizer—these materials are used based on science and what the macro-nutrients and microbe-nutrients need to grow and sustain the growing environment.
 - Kellogg uses hardwood material; this environment is well suited for Fungi growth. As the gardens mature, we can use hardwood mulch in place of Kellogg.
 - Black Kow manure (adds Nitrogen and Phosphorus, but good finished compost could replace this)
 - Cotton Burr (adds Nitrogen, texture and structure to the soil, again good finished compost could replace this ingredient)
 - Organic Fertilizer (the gardens use Texas 2 Step-well balance organic fertilizer high in Nitrogen). Please Do Not Use a Synthetic Fertilizer. The schools are deemed organic, and the Synthetic Fertilizer will cancel out what we try to accomplish with creating a healthy microbe environment. IE Worms hate Synthetic Fertilizer.

2) **Pest Control:** Pest and Insect control will be covered in more detail later. I do have a couple of observations.

- Always consider organic methods when controlling pests: The Grant and our gardens require it.
 - Sevin Dust, Non-Organic ant killers, etc. are not allowed. Orange Oil, Molasses are better options for ants.
 - Insecticidal soaps IE Neem oil, Dr. Bronner are better options for Aphids, stink bugs etc.
 - Crushed eggs shells are a better option for snails, army worms etc.
 - Additional alternative organic choices will be provided later.



Grant Goals:

The goal of the grant is to help our learners connect with the “3E’s of Healthy Living— Education, Exercise and Eating Right.” Funds are being utilized to enhance our school gardens by purchasing equipment, seeds, educational materials and more.

Contacts:

[Larry Thompson](#)

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