

Growing a Great Garden

Setting up a Schedule of Maintenance

Gardening in the classroom is a shared effort among students.

Decide on your rules of engagement in the garden and create a maintenance schedule. There is a download of the Little Green Thumbs maintenance schedule in the Little Green Thumbs Online Teacher Portal, or request a dry-erase copy from your teacher on next year's supply order form.

When creating your maintenance schedule, decide on some of the most important tasks to occur daily or weekly in the garden. You might assign a group of 2-3 students for each week's tasks, or you could decide on garden teams, each with specific responsibilities in the garden.

Ideas for garden maintenance roles:

Waterers

Just as it sounds, a team to check moisture levels and water 1-2 times a week.

Pest Patrol

The pest patrol can keep an eye out for any signs of pests, including checking sticky traps daily and looking on the underside of leaves for signs of eggs.

Doctors

Looking for any signs of plant distress a few times a week. If they notice any issues, remind them to consider their plant needs and ensure they are being met.

Appreciators

Some teachers like to assign students to act as ambassadors or appreciators of the garden. This might mean sending thank you notes to people who have helped with the garden, to garden mentors or even delivering compliments to the plants themselves!



Garden Maintenance
Schedule

Trackers

This garden team can be in charge of tracking plant growth and recording. Younger pupils can observe and report orally; older students can collect measurements and data and can produce weekly reports to be kept in a portfolio. Keep the class interested by inquiring after the health of particular plants by name and asking for suggestions.

Managers

One of the most important jobs – ensuring all other jobs are being completed!

Put up your maintenance schedule near your garden and ask students to mark when they have completed their task for the day or week!

Growing a Great Garden

Setting up a Schedule of Maintenance

One of the best parts of an LGT garden is the opportunity to shape classroom culture.

Plants need teams

You can divide up your 'Expert Teams' based on plant needs and have small groups of students responsible for a particular need – water, light, fertilizer, heat and humidity. Each team can research that particular area, do a short presentation for the class and becomes the classroom resource on that topic for the rest of the year.



Gardens Inspire Collaboration and Teamwork!

Our Little Green Thumbs teachers often ask if each child should have the responsibility of caring for a plant, or if that the garden should be a communal project to care for and harvest. We think the best is to have both! Communal gardens will reduce the likelihood of one child being disappointed at failure but caring for their own plant has potential for increased self-confidence and pride. We think that the risk can be worth it, as long as students understand that a plant dying isn't really 'failing'. Plants die all the time and when they do, we have an opportunity to learn!

We suggest having students plant their own seed at the beginning of the year to care for as they become seedlings. When the time comes to plant into the larger Earthboxes, pick the strongest plants for the communal garden. The other plants that were grown can be used for experiments. Alternatively, you could have everyone care for their own plant and grow extras for your communal Earthboxes.

Don't drown!

We've learned over the years from Little Green Thumbs teachers that there is usually more of a problem with OVER-WATERING than UNDER-WATERING in LGT gardens. Make sure students only water into the bottom reservoir on Earthboxes/Growboxes and not on top of the soil. Usually Earthboxes only need watering once or twice a week. Peat pellets and smaller containers will require more frequent watering.



Behaviour & Safety

Setting behaviour expectations from the beginning will ensure that your Little Green Thumbs garden is respected and can function an engaging space for learning.

Have students brainstorm a set of rules surrounding behaviour and safety. When students participate and create their own rules they have a better understanding of the behaviour expectations.

Ask students the following questions and record their responses or have them record their responses in groups:

- What are some ways that we can respect our garden?
- What are some ways we can respect each other in our garden?
- What are some ways we can stay safe in our garden?

* Inspired by Big Green's Rule Making Activity