

Gardening on a Budget: Inexpensive Start-Up Tips for School and Community Gardens

Starting a school or community garden doesn't have to break the bank! Read on to discover a variety of local resources available to your school or community garden, as well as some cost-saving tips.

TOOLS & MATERIALS:

- Yard sales, Habitat ReStores, Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, NextDoor, and Freecycle are all great places to look for used tools and materials. Start looking early for good deals.
- Ask local garden supply stores, nurseries, and big box stores to donate materials (ex. tools, fencing, wooden boards, seeds, seedlings, etc.)
- Buy insecticidal soap and horticultural oil as concentrate and mix it yourself. Purchase a cheap empty spray bottle and be sure to label it clearly.
- Dry out bamboo to use as trellis material. Local bamboo is often available for free.
- Construct beds from materials you already have available, such as old bricks or cinderblocks, or just raise the bed with no framing.

COMPOST & MULCH:

- The City of Raleigh [donates compost](#) to community gardens within Raleigh limits. City of Raleigh Yard Waste Center also offers [inexpensive mulch](#) available for pick-up.
- [Compost Now](#) partners with school and community gardens around the Triangle to donate compost.

SEEDS & PLANTS:

- There are a variety of seed donation programs available for school and community gardens (Seed Savers Exchange, Johnny's Select Seeds, Charles Hart Seed Company, High Mowing Seeds, TomatoFest, Territorial Seed Company, etc.).
- Is someone in your community garden group a member of the JC Raulston Arboretum? Check out their [Annual Plant Distribution](#) event for some free plants for your garden. This event is for members only.

SOIL TESTS:

- From April through November, soil samples are analyzed free of charge for NC residents. Pick up a free soil sample test kit at NC Extension Wake County Center (4001 Cary Dr, Raleigh). Drop off your completed soil sample kit back off at the Wake County Center or at NCDA&CA Agronomic Services Division (4300 Reedy Creek Rd, Raleigh). Your results will be emailed to you.

PROJECTS:

- Contact local Boy and Girl Scout Troops to inquire about scouts looking for Eagle or Gold projects.
- Apply to be a partner with [Service Raleigh](#), a local organization that matches volunteers with partner organizations for an annual, city-wide day of service in the spring.
- Middle and high schools often host clubs with service requirements or interest in agriculture (Key Club, Beta Club, FFA, 4-H, etc.). Reach out to local schools to see if there are groups willing to partner.

Questions? Contact us at mgardener@wakegov.com or 919-250-1084 (M-F, 9am-12pm, 1pm-4pm)