

Best Education-Based School Garden Rubric:

This category recognizes schools that provide exemplary hands-on education using the school garden during the school year. This can be seen by integrating garden instruction into classroom curriculum, frequent hands-on opportunities for students to learn about nutrition, gardening, cooking, and or agriculture, and through other educational opportunities such as school garden club, field trips, farmer visits, etc.

This rubric provides a structured approach to evaluating how well a school integrates garden education into its curriculum and extracurricular activities, ensuring that both classroom learning and practical experiences are considered in determining the Best Educational School Garden. Judges will be using the rating scale (0-4) below to evaluate each of the listed judging criteria.

Rubric		Score
Excellent	Outstanding, exceeded expectations	4
Very Good	Strong application	3
Fair	Basic with room for improvement	2
Needs Improvement	Inadequate information given	1
Unacceptable	Incomplete or vague description	0

School Name: _____

Total Score: _____

Application Placing: _____

After reviewing each application, judges must give a score of 0 to 4 for each of the criteria categories listed below. The application that scores the highest will be the winner for that category.

Judging Criteria	Score (0-4)
School Garden Description and Photos: The application clearly describes the school garden, including size, layout, types of plants grown, and any unique features. Judges should use the provided photos to help support the claims in the description.	
Education: An account of how the school currently integrates garden instruction into the classroom curriculum is provided, including details of frequent hands-on opportunities for students to learn about nutrition, gardening, cooking and/or agriculture. Multiple additional educational opportunities are mentioned such as a school garden club, field trips, farmers' visits, etc. The application should describe how the garden is fully integrated into the curriculum with clear learning objectives and regular activities tied to classroom lessons.	
Goals: The application has 1-2 clear, tangible, and actionable goals identified as unique to the school. The goals are timely reasonable and feasible with the upcoming school year. Actionable steps are determined.	
Student Input: It is clear that the students have taken a significant role in all aspects of the garden and have led the creativity of the project. The garden is appropriate for the children's ages and range of abilities.	
Sustaining the Garden: The application should describe how the school encourages longevity so that the garden is lasting and embedded into the culture of the school. Examples could include garden committee, summer maintenance, professional development, funding, and district support.	
Total Score	

Best Community Collaboration School Garden:

This category recognizes schools that have a variety of community collaborations during the school year. Stakeholders from nearby farms, businesses, non-profits, and/or organizations participate in a school garden committee, provide donations/grants, lead classroom and cafeteria presentations, and more.

This rubric is designed to evaluate not only the physical aspects of the school garden but also the depth and effectiveness of community collaborations in enhancing educational outcomes and sustaining the garden's impact over time. Judges will be using the rating scale (0-4) below to evaluate each of the listed judging criteria.

Rubric		Score
Excellent	Outstanding, exceeded expectations	4
Very Good	Strong application	3
Fair	Basic with room for improvement	2
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School Name: _____

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After reviewing each application, judges must give a score of 0 to 4 for each of the criteria categories listed below. The application that scores the highest will be the winner for that category.

Judging Criteria	Score (0-4)
School Garden Description and Photos: The application clearly describes the school garden, including size, layout, types of plants grown, and any unique features. Judges should use the provided photos to help support the claims in the description.	
Community Collaboration: Evidence of a structured committee involving stakeholders from nearby farms, businesses, non-profits, or organizations to help with school garden activities. The application should show evidence of innovative partnerships or projects involving community stakeholders that enhance the garden's educational and environmental impact. There should also be insight into how community involvement has improved the educational experiences of the students and the school garden.	
Goals: The application has 1-2 clear, tangible, and actionable goals identified as unique to the school. The goals are timely, reasonable, and feasible for the upcoming school year. Actionable steps are determined.	
Student Input: It is clear that the students have taken a significant role in all aspects of the garden and have led the creativity of the project. The garden is appropriate for the children's ages and range of abilities.	
Sustaining the Garden: The application should describe how the school encourages longevity so that the garden is lasting and embedded into the culture of the school. Examples could include garden committee, summer maintenance, professional development, funding, and district support.	
Total Score	

Best Start-up School Garden Proposal:

This category recognizes schools that will be breaking ground on their garden in the upcoming school year. Schools must have achievable goals, clear maintenance plans, and activities listed to provide education, harvest, and community connections using the school garden.

This rubric ensures that each aspect of the Best Start-up School Garden proposal is thoroughly evaluated, from initial motivations to long-term sustainability, community involvement, and educational value presented in the proposal. Judges should consider how the school will utilize the garden as a learning tool that enhances student learning beyond the classroom. Judges will be using the rating scale (0-4) below to evaluate each of the listed judging criteria.

Rubric		Score
Excellent	Outstanding, exceeded expectations	4
Very Good	Strong application	3
Fair	Basic with room for improvement	2
Needs Improvement	Inadequate information given	1
Unacceptable	Incomplete or vague description	0

School Name: _____

Total Score: _____

Application Placing: _____

After reviewing each application, judges must give a score of 0 to 4 for each of the criteria categories listed below. The application that scores the highest will be the winner for that category.

Judging Criteria	Score (0-4)
School Garden Description and Photos: The application clearly describes the importance of starting a school garden and the educational benefits the garden will provide for the students. Each application should have a description of the school garden, including size, layout, types of plants grown, and any unique features. Judges should use the provided photos to help support the claims in the description.	
Education: An account of how the school will integrate garden instruction into the classroom curriculum is provided, including details of frequent hands-on opportunities for students to learn about nutrition, gardening, cooking, and/or agriculture. Multiple additional educational opportunities are mentioned, such as a school garden club, field trips, farmers' visits, etc. The application should describe how the garden will be fully integrated into the curriculum with clear learning objectives and regular activities tied to classroom lessons.	
Community Collaboration: The application should have a plan for engaging community members, organizations, and businesses. There should be specific examples of community support (volunteerism, donations, partnerships) along with strategies for promoting community involvement in garden activities.	
Goals: The application has 1-2 clear, tangible, and actionable goals identified as unique to the school. The goals are timely, reasonable, and feasible for the upcoming school year. Actionable steps are determined.	
Student Input: It is clear that students will take a significant role in all aspects of the garden and have a say in the creativity of the project. The garden is appropriate for the children's ages and range of abilities.	
Sustaining the Garden and Maintenance Plan: The application should describe how the school will encourage longevity so that the garden is lasting and embedded into the culture of the school. Examples could include garden committee, summer maintenance, professional development, funding, and district support. There should be evidence of a garden maintenance plan, such as details on watering, weeding, pest control strategies, and composting.	
Utilizing Harvested Produce: The application should list strategies for using garden produce to educate students about nutrition, food systems, and sustainability. Look for plans to incorporate harvested produce into school meals, nutrition education programs, cooking classes, and community food initiatives.	
Total Score	

Best Harvest School Garden:

This category recognizes schools that utilize their garden harvest to help students understand the important health benefits of consuming fresh fruits and vegetables. Through harvesting the garden, students have the opportunity to understand the natural growth of plants — from seeds to sprouts to flowers to fruits — and learn firsthand the connection between nature and their food supply. Students are encouraged to taste the harvested produce, encouraging them to establish healthy eating habits.

By using this rubric, judges can assess each applicant's efforts in promoting healthy eating habits, environmental stewardship, and educational excellence through their school garden program. Judges will be using the rating scale (0-4) below to evaluate each of the listed judging criteria.

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After reviewing each application, judges must give a score of 0 to 4 for each of the criteria categories listed below. The application that scores the highest will be the winner for that category.

Judging Criteria	Score (0-4)
School Garden Description and Photos: The application clearly describes the school garden, including size, layout, types of plants grown, and any unique features. Judges should use the provided photos to help support the claims in the description.	
Utilization of Harvested Produce: The application shows evidence of educating students on health benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables through tasting sessions, as well as using garden produce to educate students about nutrition, food systems, and sustainability. Look for plans to incorporate harvested produce into school meals, nutrition education programs, cooking classes, and community food initiatives. Activities and lessons that demonstrate the natural growth cycle of plants. A connection was made between gardening practices and the broader food supply chain. Opportunities for students to reflect on their food choices and environmental impact.	
Goals: The application has 1-2 clear, tangible, and actionable goals identified as unique to the school. The goals are timely, reasonable, and feasible for the upcoming school year. Actionable steps are determined.	
Student Input: It is clear that the students have taken a significant role in all aspects of the garden and have led the creativity of the project. The garden is appropriate for the children's ages and range of abilities.	
Sustaining the Garden: The application should describe how the school encourages longevity so that the garden is lasting and embedded into the culture of the school. Examples could include garden committee, summer maintenance, professional development, funding, and district support.	
Total Score	

Best Pollinator Garden:

This category recognizes schools that have established a school pollinator garden that is planted predominantly with flowers that provide nectar or pollen for a wide range of pollinating insects. The use of this garden is to help students better understand the important role pollinators play in our ecosystem, along with exposing students to new ideas about food, wildlife, and plants.

This rubric is designed to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of the school's pollinator garden in meeting educational goals, supporting biodiversity, engaging the community, and promoting sustainable practices. Judges will be using the rating scale (0-4) below to evaluate each of the listed judging criteria.

Rubric		Score
Excellent	Outstanding, exceeded expectations	4
Very Good	Strong application	3
Fair	Basic with room for improvement	2
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School Garden Description and Photos: The application clearly describes the school garden, including size, layout, types of plants grown, and any unique features. Judges should use the provided photos to help support the claims in the description.	
Pollinator Education: The application demonstrates how the garden serves as a focal point for lessons on pollinators, including curriculum integration, hands-on activities, and student involvement. The application describes how the pollinator garden is used to teach students about the role of pollinators in the ecosystem and the important role they play in as it relates to agriculture and food production.	
Goals: The application has 1-2 clear, tangible, and actionable goals identified as unique to the school. The goals are timely, reasonable, and feasible for the upcoming school year. Actionable steps are determined.	
Student Input: It is clear that the students have taken a significant role in all aspects of the garden and have led the creativity of the project. The garden is appropriate for the children's ages and range of abilities.	
Sustaining the Garden: The application should describe how the school encourages longevity so that the garden is lasting and embedded into the culture of the school. Examples could include garden committee, summer maintenance, professional development, funding, and district support.	
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