

## **Volunteer Recruitment, Training and Recognition**

Every successful garden project requires committed volunteers. They become involved for a variety of reasons: to meet new people, to “make a difference” by contributing to their community or to accompany their children who are already involved in the project.

The major components of any volunteer management program are:

- Identify and recruit people who have the interest essential to accomplish the goals of the program.
- Select and place volunteers in roles that will match their skills and availability with the program’s needs.
- Orient volunteers to the overall goals of the project.
- Train volunteers in specific skills, knowledge, and goals of the project.
- Recognize and appreciate their contributions.
- Evaluate performance; provide useful feedback.

Key training concepts to communicate to the volunteers might include:

- Involve the students in the decision making such as which seeds to plant, where to plant, etc. Make it “their” garden.
- Make each student special. Complement openly and correct in private. Recognize good behavior, good ideas, good work, etc.
- Assign tasks or discuss the work to be done in the classroom before going into the garden. Be very clear in assigning work teams and tasks.
- Don’t assume that children know or remember garden techniques that have not been fully explained more than once or that have not been demonstrated. Children learn best by hands on work.
- Don’t yell for attention in the garden. Do not speak until all are attentive. Do not talk to the backs of heads.
- Young children may tire easily both physically and mentally. Don’t overwhelm them with things to do.
- Make the garden a place for serious work and for fun things to do. You need to have fun to make it fun for the children.



Some creative ways to thank volunteers are:

- Awards ceremony in the garden with the children present
- Articles in the school and local newspaper
- A lunch or dinner in their honor
- Thank you notes from the principal, parents, PTA and children

Share pictures of children and volunteers involved in the garden project