



MANAGING YOUR SCHOOL'S **PLANTING DAY**

A comprehensive guide to planning your Learning Garden's Planting Day

Running a planting day with your students requires planning and coordination. Big Green has created a guide for planning, preparing your Learning Garden, running your planting day, and follow up action items for after the planting day. Remember, you can always reach out to your Garden Educator for additional guidance to help support your school's planting day.

Plan for Your Planting Day

- **Determine what to plant where:** Reference your Annual Garden Plan and themed gardens provided by Big Green. Remember to rotate your crops each year, a rotation plan can be found in your Annual Garden Plan!
- **Determine who will participate:** Will the garden get planted with four classes? Six classes? A garden club? Decide who will help get your Learning Garden ready to grow again.
- **Select a strategy for organizing classrooms:** There are two main strategies for organizing a planting day: The Garden Team and/or volunteers lead the planting day (this is the strategy Big Green uses when planting with schools), or teachers lead their own classroom planting events.

STRATEGY A: Garden Team or Volunteer Led Planting Day

- Garden Team reaches out to volunteers to assist with the Planting Day.
- Garden Team creates a [planting day schedule](#) for teachers.
- During the planting day, the Garden Team and volunteers coordinate the how each classroom participates and ensure the Learning Garden is fully planted.

STRATEGY B: Teacher Led Plantings

- Garden Teams train participating teachers on the gardening and outdoor classroom skills they will need to plant successfully with their classrooms. This is a great way to train teachers would be to send them to a Big Green workshop.
 - It is encouraged that volunteers and para-professionals be included to assist classrooms in the planting day to provide extra hands or to split students into small groups.
- **Create a watering schedule:** Use Big Green's [Creating Your Watering Schedule](#) document for ideas and this [Blank Watering Calendar](#) to create a watering schedule for your Garden Team to use throughout the growing season.
 - **Share gardening activities with participating classrooms:** Check out the great Big Green activities you can do with your students prior to your planting day, [Planting Strings](#), or as a side activity during your planting day, [Seeds by Feel](#). Big Green has a variety of activities that can be found on our website in the [Garden Skills](#) section. Be sure to explore these resources!
 - **Make sure your garden beds are labeled:** (use if classes will be planting on their own) - Rather than having teachers navigate to the section of the Learning Garden they should work on their own, clearly label each bed with the crops that should be planted there and communicate with each teacher what bed they will be planting in. This will avoid any potential confusion and it will instill confidence in participating teachers.



Preparing Your Learning Garden

- **Remove old plants:** Look at your Learning Garden and remove any out of season, dead, diseased, or pest-ridden plants. Locate the best place to dispose of the plants you remove. If you have a compost system at your school, consider adding the removed plants to your compost, but be sure to put diseased or pest-ridden plants in the trash.
- **Top off with soil or compost:** Over time, the level of soil in your Learning Garden beds will begin to fall as organic matter decomposes and soil settles. If you have soil or compost to add to the beds, you can mix it into the top layer of the soil either before your planting day or have the students help at the beginning of the planting event. Refer to our [Amending Garden Soils](#) document.

Running Your Planting Day

- **Stick to your schedule:** If you've mapped it out well ahead of time, it should be clear which classes are planting what crops in each area of your Learning Garden. Keep your planning documents handy during the event.
- **Plant your Learning Garden:** This is the fun part! Plant your garden with seeds and seedlings for the growing season. Check out the YouTube videos and guides provided by Big Green if you're unsure of how to plant something.
- **Talking points:** If you're looking for more ideas of topics to discuss with your students, check out the Big Green's [Learning Garden Talking Points](#) to help you think about relevant topics to discuss with your students while they're out in the garden.
- **Water your Learning Garden:** Make sure all the new seeds and seedlings get plenty of water after getting planted. Your students can help by using the [Little Rainclouds Activity](#) or by making [Upcycled Watering Cans](#).
- **Mark each crop:** Making crop markers and updating your garden map helps you keep track of what is growing in each garden bed. Try recruiting an art class ahead of time to make colorful garden markers for each crop. Use Big Green's [Create Your Crop Labels](#) for inspiration. Remember, if classrooms will be planting on their own, you may want to label the beds ahead of time to ensure teachers plant in the correct location.
- **Have Fun!** This one is easy. Make sure that both you and all students helping have a fun time in your Learning Garden! It should be a memorable and educational experience for everyone.

After the Planting Day

- **Use your watering schedule:** Take care of your garden, check for pests, water every day, and eventually harvest all the edible goodies growing in your garden!
- **Track the growth and germination of your planting day:** Keep close tabs on the Learning Garden after you plant it. If you are uncertain if your planting day was successful, reach out to your Garden Educator. You can expect seeds to germinate one and two weeks after planting. If your seeds do not germinate, your Garden Educator will work with you to replant or explore other options for growth that still fits within your growing season timeline.

