GARDEN CHECK-UP

A CHECK LIST TO HELP ASSESS THE HEALTH OF YOUR GARDEN

Soil
- **Texture**: On a scale of 1-10, how easy is it to dig into the soil?
  1=impossible, 10=easy
- **Moisture**: On a scale of 1-10, how moist is the soil?
  1=dry, 10=water pooled on soil surface
- **Depth**: Is the soil below the lip of the garden bed? If yes, how far below?

Plant Growth
- **Color**: Do any plants have yellow, brown, or red/purple leaves? Where is the discoloration located on the plant?
- **Plant Size**: Are plants at the appropriate height and width based on the date they were planted?
- **Space**: How much space is between plants? Are there any plants that are too close? Not close enough?
- **Weeds**: Are any weeds growing in the garden? Do they need to be pulled?
- **Sun**: Are plants getting enough sun? Are there any sources of shade that might inhibit plant growth?
- **Additional Support**: Do any plants need additional support? (stakes or cages)
- **Ready to Harvest**: Are any plants ready to harvest? If so, which ones?

Animals and Insects
- **Presence**: How many insects and animals are present in the garden? (ex: birds, squirrels, rabbits, insects)
- **Damage**: Are there any plants that have animal or insect damage (tears, holes, skeletonized leaves, or missing plants)? Is there any evidence of the insect or animal that caused the damage (footprints in the garden bed or frass/scat)?

Water
- **Checklist**: Do you have the following items in your garden area — spigot (water source), drip line (brown tubing), hoses, buckets, watering cans, other?
- **Functionality**: Are the water spigot and drip line working correctly? If not, what are the issues?

Garden Area
- **Bed Condition**: Are any beds damaged? If yes, how are they damaged?
- **Vandalism**: Is there any tagging or graffiti in the garden?
- **Trash**: How many pieces of trash are in the garden?
- **Other**: Other observations or questions?
Instructions: It’s time to put your lab coat on! This activity serves as a guide for you and your students to assess the health of your garden using elements of the scientific method. Steps 1-3 can be completed during your initial visit to the Learning Garden, while steps 4-6 will be completed during additional follow-up visits to the garden.

Step 1: Make Observations/Ask Questions: Use the Visual Assessment Checklist to make observations about the garden. The checklist asks you to make note of things that are going well in the garden, as well as any areas for improvement. After completing the checklist, move on to step 2 of the process (research).

Step 2: Research: Discuss your garden observations with a partner(s) using previous garden knowledge/experiences. Did other students observe similar or different things than you? After talking with your partner, discuss your observations with the whole group and your garden educator to better understand the problem and any potential solutions.

Step 3: Form a Hypothesis: Think critically to find the best solution to address the identified problems.

Step 4: Perform an Experiment: Put your plan into action by testing your hypothesis.

Step 5: Analyze Data/Draw Conclusions: Record findings on the effectiveness of your proposed hypothesis and share with your Garden Educator and school community.

Step 6: Repeat the Process (if necessary): Begin the process over again to find the correct solution.