Helping Your Playground Thrive: A Stewardship Manual
Cover photos: Avery Wham
The Trust for Public Land conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and other natural places, ensuring livable communities for generations to come.
Acknowledgments

A first order of thanks go to the staff of TPL’s New York City Program: Andy Stone, Mary Alice Lee, Julieth Rivera, Akila Shenoy, Maddalena Polletta, Marisa Dedominicis, and Joanne Morse, without whose years in the field developing a model for playground stewardship this project would not have come to be. Thanks to all of the above for their thoughtful suggestions and review of this manual throughout its development. Special thanks to Matt Shaffer for his tireless assistance with production.

The Trust for Public Land also wishes to thank the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation and the Department of Education, our partners in the Schoolyards to Playgrounds initiative, for the review of the final draft and their additions to the resources sections. Thanks also to the Division of School Facilities for their helpful comments on the Frequently Asked Questions: Maintenance and Operations page.

Special thanks go to Partnerships for Parks for permission to use or adapt its tip sheets throughout this manual and to Asaf Klein for his helpful advice on the stewardship of public spaces. Thanks also to Rasheed Hislop and Leslie Boden for sharing with us GreenThumb’s “School and Youth Gardening in New York City: A Resource Guide,” (Leslie F. Boden, 2008), and to Brooklyn Botanic Garden for permission to include its handout “Using Mulch” in the Appendix. Finally thanks to Lorraine Brooks at the Cornell University Cooperative Extension New York City Urban Environment Program for permission to reprint their Urban Garden Planting Calendar and Guide.

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Layout by raven + crow studio - ravenandcrowstudio.com.
The Schoolyards to Playgrounds Initiative

In April 2007, Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced PlaNYC 2030, a plan to make New York a cleaner, greener city as our population grows by an anticipated 1 million inhabitants. As part of that plan, the mayor launched the Schoolyards to Playgrounds initiative to create more open space options for youths living in parts of the city currently underserved by parks. The program aims to convert 256 schoolyards across the city into thriving community playgrounds. These schoolyards will serve both the schoolchildren, who will continue to have exclusive use of the space during the school day, and also the communities around them with whom the yards will be shared in the after-school hours, on weekends, and during school breaks. These new playgrounds will help achieve the mayor’s goal of putting a playground or open space within a 10-minute walk of every New Yorker by the year 2030.

The Schoolyards to Playgrounds initiative has been an exciting public-private partnership among the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, the Department of Education and The Trust for Public Land (TPL). The Department of Education continues to own these spaces and has responsibility for maintaining them. The Parks Department has supervised the design and managed the renovation of 123 schoolyards in need of improvements. By adding playing fields, tracks, courts, trees, benches, play equipment, and garden areas, it is converting these schoolyards into new desirable open spaces for schoolchildren and community members to enjoy. TPL, the third partner in the program, has facilitated a participatory design process at these sites, allowing the selected schools and communities to take the lead in designing their new community playgrounds. TPL also strongly believes in stewardship as a key element in the success of these spaces and has committed to helping schools in that effort once their playgrounds are built.

This program represents an exciting new approach to shared open space. By transforming these currently underutilized schoolyards, the city is making new recreational amenities available to New Yorkers in all five boroughs, often in places with no other nearby parks. These community playgrounds will be sites for personal growth, community exchange, and outdoor learning, bringing people together, outside, in their own neighborhoods.
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Stewarding Your School-Community Playground

During the design process you played a vital role in envisioning the physical transformation of your space and began to think about new possibilities for that space once it was built. The construction phase is over, your new community playground has just opened or is about to open to the public, and you are now moving into the third—and possibly most important—phase of the process, stewardship. Stewardship means taking care of something that is not just going to be used by you but also by your school and larger community. To be a steward of a place is to be invested in its success and to do things to ensure that it thrives, for you and for everyone else. The design and construction phase were relatively short compared to the actual life of the playground once its up and running, which makes it important for you to take an active role in making it fun, safe, and lively.

A thriving neighborhood playground is a space for healthy outdoor recreation and relaxation, but it can also become an anchor for positive community transformation. The Trust for Public Land’s experience in building school-anchored playgrounds has demonstrated that they succeed when the school and students establish a culture of positive use and stewardship for the space that carries over to after-school hours. Public schools and the communities they serve are natural partners in the stewardship of community playgrounds. Parents of the students and neighbors across the street have an investment in seeing the playground stay safe, fun, and inviting. The key to success in shared public spaces is fostering a sense of ownership and stewardship in all stakeholders: people within the school and community who have the potential to use, enjoy, and care for the space.

This manual shares ideas, tools, and resources to help you become a motivated steward for your new school-community playground and to ensure its future success. It includes ideas on events, programming, tree and garden care, funding, and safety, along with suggestions of where to go with your concerns. We hope it will help your school and community work together to create a neighborhood playground all can enjoy for years to come.
The TPL Experience: Case Studies

The Trust for Public Land (TPL), in its work creating community playgrounds in public schoolyards in New York City, has found that the most successful playgrounds are ones where a neighborhood organization, already serving the broader community, partners with the school to create programming and to maintain the new public space. Usually this group will run after-school programs on site, sponsoring recreational activities for the schoolchildren and acting as informal supervisors in the absence of school staff. The neighborhood organization has ties to the local community that the school alone does not and can facilitate the stewardship of the schoolyard as a thriving, shared space. Some examples follow.

P.S. 15K
Forming a Playground Committee
Red Hook, Brooklyn

Good Shepherd Services is a community-based organization that provides a broad array of individual, family, and school-based services to prevent youth from becoming disconnected from society in high-need communities in Brooklyn and the Bronx. At P.S. 15K, the organization runs a Beacon program that offers after-school activities during the school year from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. daily and a seven-week summer day camp from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. It is also trying to implement drop-in programs by providing staff in the schoolyard during the weeks when school is not in session and facilitating informal art and recreational activities for anybody in the community.

Another partner at P.S. 15K has been Added Value, a nonprofit group that runs an urban farm in the neighborhood, plants vegetables in the schoolyard gardens, and provides environmental education for students.

Soon after P.S. 15K’s playground opened, Good Shepherd, acting on the recommendation of the local community board, helped form a group called Friends of P.S. 15K Playground, which includes the school’s principal, custodian, parents, and interested community members. The group meets monthly to address all issues pertaining to the care and use of the playground and is spearheaded by a parent on the team. It has already
held a Mother’s Day plant sale to raise money for the school and is planning future events. Through collaboration among two different community-based organizations and members of both the school and neighborhood, P.S. 15K has a large network of independent playground stewards and a forum for them to regularly come together.

Though your school may not yet have community-based stewardship, understanding how other neighborhoods have successfully managed their playgrounds may help you find ways to create a stewardship strategy for your space. Every school is different, and ultimately you will learn what works best for your school and community.

P.S. 328K
Holding Events to Attract the Community
East New York, Brooklyn

Groundwork, Inc., is a nonprofit organization that provides high-quality educational programs and support services to families in East New York, Brooklyn. At P.S. 328K Groundwork staff runs an after-school program during the school year and, once the playground was built, began to hold events in the schoolyard to welcome in the community. Events have been geared specifically toward the local residents the group serves in East New York and have helped to establish the playground as a positive gathering space in the neighborhood.

Groundwork has held a health fair, a series of cultural performances in partnership with the Caribbean Cultural Center called First Saturdays, a breast cancer walkathon, and a Groundwork Olympics. During the summer of 2007, the group organized it’s first outdoor movie night, Cinema Under the Stars, which it has made into an annual tradition. A movie is selected through a community vote and screened in the schoolyard with the help of Rooftop Films, another nonprofit organization that provides projector, screen, and audio equipment rentals.

In planning many of these events, Groundwork has partnered with other community-based organizations to try to get others involved and invested in stewarding the schoolyard. Since Groundwork is a visible group within the community, with offices only blocks away from the school, the organization functions as a mediator for the neighborhood residents, who use and steward the site. When the community brings issues to Groundwork’s attention, staff members meet with the school principal and custodian to discuss the playground, helping it remain open, clean, and active. Through these methods and others, Groundwork is trying to create a culture of positive use in the schoolyard to ensure its future success.
Regularly scheduled after-school programming creates a culture of positive activity on the playground and builds an extended network of people who care about its future. However, this increased activity will likely require some kind of coordination. The most effective tool for creating a successful community playground is to establish a core group of people who care for it and work to promote positive use and to address negative use issues. This group could be a “playground committee,” much as public parks have “friends of” groups that function as the organizing force for their neighborhood parks.

A playground committee is a great vehicle for making things happen in your playground. Whether it’s implementing all the great ideas you had during the design phase, planning events, coordinating regular outdoor programs, or addressing problems, the playground committee can be the go-to forum for all matters regarding the playground. Build this core group and meet regularly.

Organizing Your Core Group

Who should be on your playground committee? The committee is different from the larger, extended network of stewards; it is a small, committed group of people who will be lead stewards for your new playground. It will take initiative and motivate others to get involved.

In creating this group, your team of students, teachers, administrators, and parents who participated in the design process are a natural place to start. Who on that team had the most ideas and enthusiasm for the playground?

Who could be a leader and is likely to follow through? Tap them for the committee. It is important to make sure that all the different constituencies are represented. You not only want members from the school community on the team but also enthusiastic members from the neighborhood. Committee members might include:

- Teacher or staff member who coordinates recess
- Interested parents
- After-school program coordinator
- Physical education teacher(s)
- PTA officer or parent coordinator
- Other teacher (science/art)
- Community members (neighbors who live across the street)
- Student government representatives

Meet Regularly

It is important that the playground committee meet regularly to discuss the progress of the playground, brainstorm ideas for events and programs, and facilitate the implementation of those ideas. If there are issues regarding use or maintenance, the playground committee meetings function as a forum to hear those concerns and brainstorm possible solutions.

You may decide to incorporate the playground discussions into an existing framework, such as adding it as a regular agenda item to your school leadership team meetings, where these key school leaders are already gathered. Whichever you choose, it is important to find the time to talk about and organize around your playground.
Keep Growing!
Simply because you’ve established your core group doesn’t mean the members of the playground committee can’t change or you can’t create subcommittees that focus on specific events or issues. Creating subcommittees is actually an effective way to organize and execute an event. It is also a great way to recruit others into the playground committee. Identifying possible stewards should always be part of the process.

Setting Goals*
Setting goals for your group is one of the first things you will do together. As you determine your goals, it’s important to make a distinction between your group’s overarching mission and the steps that you will take to achieve that mission. Achieving a lofty mission requires taking small, tangible steps. These steps are your group’s goals. Your mission is most likely one or more of these three things:

Physically improving the playground, from cleaning to planting

Programming the playground: hosting regular and special events, from concerts to a day camp

Increasing playground use: bringing children into the playground and neighbors into the garden

Your short-range goals should be simple and easily achievable; your long-range goals can be more complicated. For example, the first step to creating a positive culture at your playground may be planning an event, while it will take a lot more time and effort to create a daily sports program after school.

What follows is a list of actions commonly taken by parks groups that should give you an idea of what is achievable right now and what is achievable in the future. Of course, every situation is unique, and you should take this guide as an approximation.

**Short-Range Goals:**
- Removing graffiti and trash
- Planting flowers
- Hosting a concert or other event

**Mid-Range Goals:**
- Hosting regular cleanups
- Buying tools and supplies
- Buying and planting flowers and bulbs
- Regularly weeding and watering planting areas
- Planting native species in natural areas
- Increasing police presence
- Hosting a performance series, festival, sports tournament, or other large event

**Long-Range Goals:**
- Attracting regular programming by local or citywide organizations
- Hosting a regular summer program for kids (basketball league, arts and crafts)
- Hosting regular environmental education and restoration projects
- Creating a citizens’ safety patrol
- Acquiring funding for a playground coordinator or gardener

*Adapted from “Setting Goals” by Partnerships for Parks. Partnerships for Parks is a joint program of CityParks Foundation and the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. www.partnershipsforparks.org
Building Relationships:
People to Know*

Building alliances with other groups and government agencies is essential. It is important to know whom to reach out to for different goals or issues you have with your playground. Civic organizations, your community board, elected officials, the Department of Education, the police department, and other groups can help your community playground. Different people have different skills and connections, and they may all come in handy. Below are some key partners with whom your group should work to make things happen for your playground.

School Principal and Custodial Staff

The custodial staff and school principal are vital to the proper functioning of the playground. Most decisions will have to go through the school’s top leader and the person in charge of opening, closing, and maintaining the space. It is important to build strong relationships with them and always keep them in the loop!

Police Precinct Community Council

Each precinct has a community council, a group of concerned citizens who meet monthly with precinct officers to discuss neighborhood crime issues. The precinct’s commanding officer and community affairs officer attend meetings. Usually open to everyone, meetings are an ideal setting for citizens to voice concerns and build a good working relationship with the police. You can find meeting dates and contact information by looking up your local precinct at www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/home/precincts.shtml.

Community Board

This local, representative body plays an advisory role in dealing with land use and zoning, the city budget, municipal service delivery, and other community welfare matters. It holds hearings or investigations on any matter relating to the district’s welfare. Issues of crime and safety interest the board greatly. Many community boards have open space or parks committees. Open to the public, monthly meetings are an excellent forum for your group to raise concerns or publicize events. The board can help get additional services and funding to address the issues you raise. Find your community board at www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/directory.shtml.

Elected Officials

Your city council member, borough president, or state senator or assemblyperson can help. Council members can use the city’s budget to fund improvement projects or after-school programming.

Local Civic Groups, Block Associations, Churches, Schools, and Merchants

These organizations can be potentially powerful allies for your group, especially if they have similar goals for the neighborhood. Reach out to leaders of interested groups, meet together to identify shared goals, encourage them to join the playground committee.
Keep in mind the following points when dealing with government agencies.

Be Polite, Patient, and Persistent

“You can catch a lot more flies with honey than with vinegar,” goes the old saying. Civility counts, and it is essential for a good relationship. Screaming, insulting, and demanding may work once, but it rarely solves the problem in the long term. Sure, sometimes you’ve got a right to get angry. But it’s risky and should be a last resort.

Know Who Has the Power to Solve the Problem

When people seem to be unresponsive, it’s often simply because they really can’t do anything about the issue you are raising. Unfortunately, people don’t always explain that. Know the chain of command in the agency you call, and move up the chain as appropriate. If you’re uncertain who’s in charge, be specific in your request so that you can find the person most able to deal with your problem.

Get to Know Different People at the Agency

Some people at public agencies can be unresponsive or indifferent, but many others aren’t. Just because the agency makes a decision you don’t like, don’t let that destroy good relationships you have built. View someone’s actions in the context of your history with him or her. And keep in mind that in many cases, people would genuinely like to help but can’t because of limited resources.

When approaching elected officials, keep in mind the following pointers.

Look Professional

Make sure the official knows that you represent a larger constituency. But don’t bring your whole group to the meeting; you don’t want to make the official feel that he or she is being attacked.

Be Prepared

Research the official’s voting record on the issues that concern you. Bring materials from your group to show that you are serious and committed.

Know the Details

Know specifically what you want and specifically why you think it’s worth doing. If you are asked a question to which you don’t know the answer, say you will get the information after the meeting. If the official is unavailable, meet with a senior staff member. Elected officials’ staff can often have a great deal of influence.

*Adapted from “Building Relationships” by Partnerships for Parks. Partnerships for Parks is a joint program of CityParks Foundation and the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. www.partnershipsforparks.org.
INVITING OTHER GROUPS TO USE THE PLAYGROUND WHEN SCHOOL IS NOT IN SESSION, WHETHER FOR FORMAL AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS, SUMMER DAY CAMP, OR ROUTINE SPORTS PRACTICES AND GAMES, NOT ONLY SERVES YOUR STUDENTS BUT ALSO STARTS TO CREATE A POSITIVE CULTURE IN YOUR NEW SPACE THAT BECOMES VISIBLE AND EXEMPLARY FOR THE REST OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO ORGANIZE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING. A COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION CAN TAKE ON THE MAJOR COORDINATION ROLE, OR THE PLAYGROUND COMMITTEE CAN WORK WITH TEACHERS AND STAFF OR COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO DEVISE A UNIQUE PROGRAM. YOU CAN RUN PROGRAMS EXCLUSIVELY FOR STUDENTS ATTENDING YOUR SCHOOL OR PROVIDE GENERAL PROGRAMMING IN THE SCHOOLYARD FOR BOTH THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO THINK ABOUT BOTH TYPES OF USERS AND TO NEGOTIATE TIMES WHEN THE PLAYGROUND WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO EACH. THE NEXT FEW PAGES FEATURE TIPS ON STARTING PROGRAMS IN YOUR SCHOOLYARD.
Getting People Involved

You will need to garner interest in a program from parents, teachers, school administrators, and community members. It is important to reach out to these people in the planning stages to understand the needs of your community and to evaluate the resources you may already have available to you. You might want to present your ideas at a PTA meeting, community board meeting, or another such forum, both to gauge the interest of your school and community and to recruit other organizers. Following are some people to whom you should talk.

Principal and Custodian
It is very important to talk to your school principal and custodian about the logistics of using the facilities and equipment after school. The principal will be especially helpful in acquiring funds and reaching out to elected officials to get your program off the ground.

Parents
The parents will be the ones registering their children in the program, so it is important to gauge their interest in certain kinds of activities and to get them to play a role in the planning. You could create a program where both children and parents participate; the schoolyard is a great place for multigenerational activities.

Teachers
Teachers will know what kinds of programs will best complement the school day, and some may even be willing to supervise or teach certain skills, such as arts and crafts or gardening.

Neighbors
Ideally the program you start will serve those beyond your school community. Neighbors will know what kinds of activities and programs might benefit the entire neighborhood. Maybe a particular group needs an outdoor space, or teenagers need positive after-school activities.

Local Officials
Local officials can help with funding and are always interested in supporting youth-development programs in their neighborhoods.
A helpful partnership for creating a program at your school is one with a local, community-based organization (CBO) that already provides youth and family services in your neighborhood. One of the greatest challenges in starting a program is not having the staff, funding, or expertise to run it. A CBO comes with all of these resources and skills and can be an invaluable asset to the success of your playground.

At some community playgrounds, a single, community-based, youth-development or family-services agency will partner with the school to coordinate a majority of the programming. The great thing about this relationship is that the CBO has established roots in the neighborhood and is able to mediate with the community during the public-use hours. Here are some groups TPL has worked with in the past and their communities, followed by a couple of examples of their after-school projects:

- **New Settlement Apartments** — Mount Eden, Bronx
- **Groundwork, Inc.** — East New York, Brooklyn
- **Good Shepherd Services** — Red Hook, Gowanus; Brooklyn/Kingsbridge Heights, Bronx
- **Flatbush Development Corporation** — Flatbush, Kensington; Brooklyn
- **Virtual Y** — Bushwick, Crown Heights; Brooklyn
- **The Center for Family Life** — Sunset Park, Brooklyn
- **Children’s Aid Society** — East Harlem, Washington Heights; Manhattan

**P.S. 64X—Staffing the Playground with Neighborhood Residents**

**Mt. Eden, Bronx**

New Settlement Apartments is a nonprofit housing and community service organization located in an underserved area of the southwest Bronx. It has a 15-year track record of active commitment to neighborhood revitalization, community development, and excellence in community public schools. It runs an after-school program and a summer day camp at P.S. 64X. During the school year, the yard is used exclusively by the after-school program from the end of the school day until 4:30 p.m., but then opens for public use from 4:30 p.m. until dusk. Also, for eight weeks in the summer, New Settlement runs a summer camp that uses the yard exclusively from 9 a.m. to noon. From noon until dusk, the yard is open to the general public. On weekends, when no formal programs are running, New Settlement or the custodian opens the yard from 10 a.m. until dusk.

The key to success is staffing the playground with local residents, who know the users and are invested in maintaining their neighborhood’s new public space. When the yard is open for public use, New Settlement provides at least four staff members on site, including young people from the Summer Youth Employment Program, provided by the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development. The youth monitor sign-in sheets at a table near the entrance, set out equipment, provide supervision, take
out trash, and close the schoolyard at the end of the day. In order to close the yard, the program supervisor simply goes around to all the different user groups, gives a 15-minute warning, and waits until everyone leaves the yard to lock the gates. Staff members are respected and trusted since they grew up in the area and know the neighborhood well.

P.S. 503/506K—Getting Families into the Schoolyard
Sunset Park, Brooklyn

Center for Family Life (CFL) runs after-school and night programs at P.S. 503/506K and is a neighborhood-based social service center in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. It runs a drop-in Beacon program in the schoolyard Tuesday through Friday from 3:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. The yard is open to the public during these times, and users have to sign in at the gate with CFL staff. A parent must accompany children less than 10 years old. The number of CFL staff in the yard varies throughout the day, from about four to eleven.

This kind of program, which provides supervision in the yard through the evening hours, promotes multigenerational use; many different age groups use the space at once. From 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. parents are available to join their children in the schoolyard for valuable outdoor recreational experiences together. CFL organizes an age/gender–specific schedule for soccer games on the coveted turf field, with adults playing Wednesday and Thursday from 6:30 p.m. until dark, and younger groups having priority on the field at other times. Multigenerational use is great for the life of the playground since it creates a group of invested adult users who steward the space for themselves, their children, and their younger siblings.

The following strategies can help you find a CBO in your area.

Ask Around
Find out with which groups other schools in your area have partnered and talk to your local community board or civic associations. You can also use this map tool (www.nyc.gov/citymap) to search after-school programs in your area and contact them to see if they’d be interested in expanding their programs at your school.

Look Up Umbrella Organizations that List CBOs by Borough
These include United Neighborhood Houses (www.unhny.org/beta/member/agency_list.cfm) and Association for Neighborhood Housing and Development (www.anhd.org/members/members.html).

Think Beyond CBOs
Your local church or hospital may also be a good place to start. These organizations are often interested in providing social services and can also make great partners, especially if you want to focus your program on a certain theme, such as health.
There are a variety of programs you could start in your schoolyard. Whether focused on sports or gardening, whether a small program run twice a week by a group of teachers or a full-fledged Beacon program, any kind of activity that ensures a regular presence in the schoolyard is helpful. A good way to start is by assessing the needs of your school and community, then securing available resources to create an after-school program to meet those needs. If you require some supervision for public use of the space, you may want to create a program that encourages all ages to use the schoolyard, as that will get adults into the space with their children. If there is a dearth of activities for teenagers in the neighborhood, you may want to organize some after-school sports leagues.

If you are partnering with a CBO, the group will most likely develop a program that best suits your school with its available resources. CBOs will often have a contract with one or more funders to run programs at schools. Examples of funders follow.

Beacon Programs
Beacon programs are school-based community centers that serve children, youth, and adults. There are currently 80 Beacons located throughout New York City, operating in the afternoons and evenings, on weekends, and during school holidays and vacations, including the summer.

Out-of-School Time Program
The Out-of-School Time (OST) program provides a mix of academic, recreational, and cultural activities for young people (grades K–12) after school, during holidays, and in the summer. Programs are free and can be found in every city neighborhood.

21st Century Community Learning Centers
This program supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty, low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs; and provides literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.

The following list includes programs that range in cost that you can invite into your school. Many of them require a teacher or staff member to act as site coordinator and get trained to implement their programs.

New York Road Runners Foundation
www.nyrrf.org
New York Road Runners Foundation has two cost-free programs aimed
at elementary and middle school students: Mighty Milers and Young Runners. Mighty Milers is an introductory program that instills the daily habit of running or walking for physical fitness and overall health in as little as 15 minutes a day. Young Runners is an advanced version of the Mighty Milers that motivates elementary through high school students to run from one mile to ten kilometers (6.2 miles) through participation in a foundation-established running team. An on-site, volunteer staff member (physical education or other interested teacher) is required to coordinate the program.

Big Apple Games

Big Apple Games is a summer recreational program designed as an extension of PSAL (Public School Athletic League) to accommodate children from grades 5–12, including students with special needs. Programs for varying age groups include swimming, arts and crafts, cross country, and track and field. All sites are staffed by licensed teachers and school safety officers.

Sports & Arts in Schools Foundation
www.sasfny.org

Sports & Arts in Schools Foundation (SASF) provides comprehensive, extended-school-day services tailored to meet the individual needs and interests of New York City public school students in grades 1–12. Programming operates year round and reflects the extraordinary diversity in cultural heritage and expression found in the city’s neighborhoods. Programs include Champions Clubs, Academic Champions, C.H.A.M.P.S., and summer programs.

New York Junior Tennis League
www.nyjtl.org

Since 1983 New York Junior Tennis League (NYJTL) has been recognized as the leader in the national effort to include tennis as a regular activity in physical education. By providing free equipment, materials, and teacher training to schools, NYJTL facilitates the teaching of tennis to large groups of students in gyms and schoolyards.

Asphalt Green
www.asphaltgreen.org

In New York City schools, recess is often a chaotic, unsupervised, dangerous affair. Bullying is common, the physical spaces are often small and neglected, and activity levels are low. Asphalt Green’s Recess Enhancement Program (REP) aims to transform this time of day into a “teachable moment,” encouraging physical activity and pro-social behaviors in a fun, safe environment.

REP works with upper elementary and middle schools to identify children who can become recess leaders. Recess specialists teach them games that emphasize pro-social skills such as conflict resolution and leadership, while keeping them active and energized. In turn, these recess leaders teach their peers the games and
strategies they have learned. The result is organic, peer-to-peer transmission of games and a dramatic increase in activity. Participating schools also receive training and workshops for their recess personnel, and parents are encouraged to attend as well.

Programming Resources

Below are the four primary sources for after-school programming in the city. They can provide guidance for starting programs, finding funding, and improving your programs once they are in place. It is a good idea to visit all four of these Web sites in your planning stages.

Department of Youth & Community Development
This department provides New York City with high-quality youth and family programming by contracting with nonprofit and community-based organizations that provide these services. It is a great resource for program funding, including Out-of-School Time and Beacon programs.

Partnership for After School Education
www.pasesetter.com/index.html
Partnership for After School Education is a child-focused organization that promotes and supports quality after-school programs, particularly those assisting young people from underserved communities. It provides professional development for after-school staff and youth-serving agency leaders and connects agencies that run after-school programs.

The After-School Corporation
www.tascorp.org/
This nonprofit organization supports comprehensive after-school programs in New York City. Its goal is to enhance the quality, availability, and sustainability of programs locally and nationally.

Afterschool Alliance
www.afterschoolalliance.org
The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of after-school programs and advocating for quality, affordable programs for all children. It is supported by a group of public, private, and nonprofit organizations that share the alliance’s vision of ensuring that all children have access to after-school programs.
While after-school programming ensures that children actively enjoy the playground, a thriving space also depends upon the wider community participating in its life and upkeep. One of the best ways to build positive connections between nearby residents and the new playground is to host special events or art projects that will bring them in to enjoy or take care of the space. It could be a cultural day, health fair, or garden spruce-up. Whatever draws your particular community in to feel part of the playground is worthwhile, especially during the first months the playground is open to the public when you may be changing the use pattern of the yard. This section includes ideas for events that have been held successfully in NYC schoolyards and parks, along with detailed tip sheets about choosing, organizing, and publicizing your events. Well-run events can do many things for the playground.
Events Bring People Into the Playground
If people have a good time at the playground because you’ve drawn them in with a good event, they will love it, care for it, and fight for it. If people haven’t been using the playground enough, an event can remind them what a great place it is.

Events Beautify Your Playground
Holding a spruce-up or planting day can make the space look beautiful and well cared for. A playground that is taken care of attracts people, and people make the playground vibrant and safe.

Events Foster Stewardship
Whenever people help the playground through one of your events, they feel more responsible for it. From volunteers mulching trees to merchants donating food, neighbors who help the playground once are more likely to think of it as their own and help it again. If you’ve formed a playground committee, set up a table at every event where people can sign up for your mailing list and find out how to get involved in planning for your playground.

Events Help Leverage Resources
A successful track record of putting on events can show potential supporters that your group can make a difference in the neighborhood. This confidence helps when seeking funds from everyone from elected officials to corporations and local businesses.

*Adapted from “Why Events Are Important” by Partnerships for Parks. Partnerships for Parks is a joint program of CityParks Foundation and New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. www.partnershipsforparks.org.
Success Stories

Following are a few examples of community events held successfully at school playgrounds in New York within the last few years.

**Cinema Under the Stars**  
At P.S. 328K in East New York, community sponsor Groundwork, Inc., holds an outdoor movie night in the schoolyard each summer. It rents a screen, projector, and loudspeakers from Rooftop Films (718.417.7362, rooftopfilms.com/rentals.html), whose staff come set up equipment and screen the film. Groundwork asks the community to vote on which film to screen. To add to the festive atmosphere, the group rents popcorn machines from a local party supply store and gives out free bags to the audience. At the last movie night in 2009, about 125 neighbors, schoolchildren, and families sat on the turf, enjoying the show.

**First Saturdays**  
Groundwork also partnered with East New York Caribbean Cultural Center to host a cultural fair at P.S. 328K the first Saturday of each summer month. The festivals featured traditional costumes, dance, music, and food, and included dance lessons for the audience.

**Earth Day Projects**  
Future Urban Naturalists is the student garden club at P.S. 242M’s Future Leader’s Institute in Harlem. This organization partnered with Columbia University to celebrate Earth Day by leading teams of neighborhood volunteers in garden enhancement projects. These included building a greenhouse, transplanting a tree, laying down a gravel walkway, creating protected areas, and building an irrigation system for a garden. Students also painted educational signs for their plants. Participants came away with new knowledge, a sense of accomplishment, and a feeling of connection with the schoolyard garden.
### Event Ideas

Events to Hold Annually on Specific Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>Late March or early April</td>
<td>Egg hunt, decorate eggs, visit from Easter Bunny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth Day</td>
<td>April 22</td>
<td>Tree identification games, plant and weed, visit from a naturalist, information and petition tables set up by environmental groups, composting demonstration Ideas: Bronx and Brooklyn Botanical Gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbor Day</td>
<td>Last Friday in April</td>
<td>Tree pruning workshops, compost and mulch the tree pits, plant annuals around trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring It’s My Park! Day</td>
<td>3rd Saturday in May</td>
<td>Citywide celebration of parks: spruce up playground, plant annuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence Day</td>
<td>July 4</td>
<td>Games, performances, parades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall It’s My Park! Day</td>
<td>3rd Saturday in October</td>
<td>Citywide celebration of parks: plant bulbs in gardens or tree pits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halloween</td>
<td>October 31</td>
<td>Costume contests, ghost stories, candy, bob for apples, carve or paint pumpkins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday Event</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Sing carols, make ornaments, light a tree or menorah, visit from Santa Claus, Kwanzaa ceremony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from “Event Ideas” by Partnerships for Parks. Partnerships for Parks is a joint program of CityParks Foundation and New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. [www.partnershipsforparks.org](http://www.partnershipsforparks.org).*
## Events to Hold Throughout the Season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Living Fair</td>
<td></td>
<td>Enlist local hospital or clinic to offer free screenings for high blood pressure, invite coach or nutritionist to give fitness advice and training, provide information on free health care through Child Health Plus <a href="http://www.nyhealth.gov/nysdoh/chplus/">www.nyhealth.gov/nysdoh/chplus/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spruce up Your Playground Day</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pick up trash, paint signs, plant flowers, mulch trees, encourage volunteers to care for and respect the space, serve lemonade and cookies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Festival</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teach traditional arts and crafts, create costumes, music, dance lessons, storytelling, food, games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Olympics</td>
<td></td>
<td>Host basketball, softball, cricket, handball, track and field, jump rope, handstand competitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Outdoor Movie Night</td>
<td></td>
<td>Show a family movie or series; project film against a playground wall or rent a screen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karate/martial arts/self-defense presentations or workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td>Invite a local martial arts school to make a presentation or teach a self-defense workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast Cancer Walk-a-thon</td>
<td></td>
<td>Get sponsors and walk laps around the track to raise money for a good cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Slams, Talent Competition</td>
<td></td>
<td>Invite local or citywide groups engaged in writing or performance projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerts/performances</td>
<td></td>
<td>Host plays, puppet shows, storytelling, poetry reading, music and dance concerts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butterfly Festival</td>
<td></td>
<td>Release native butterflies, create butterfly mobiles and art, photograph butterflies on native butterfly bushes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidsmobile (Brooklyn only)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Call the Public Library and request a visit from the mobile library; priority goes to schools with below-average reading scores or far from any library branches <a href="http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/kidsmobile.jsp">www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/kidsmobile.jsp</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety/Police Fair</td>
<td></td>
<td>Engage community liaison at local precinct to give presentation on safety in the playground, at home, and around the neighborhood and to offer tours of police and emergency vehicles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tap into Other Groups
Encourage everyone—after-school programs, community-based organizations, athletic leagues, day camps, block and tenant associations, local gardening and arts groups—to participate in relevant events. Better yet, get them to co-sponsor the event. Your group will benefit from another set of connections, multiple resources, and (ideally) a lighter workload.

Don’t Bite Off More Than You Can Chew
The size and scale of events should be decided by the number of people willing to help organize them. Do something simple first, then build from there.

Plan Ahead
Allow two weeks of planning for regular clean-ups, at least a month for small events, and several months for large events.

Publicize, Publicize, Publicize
Notify your mailing list. Put fliers up everywhere: your school entrance, shop windows (ask first), bulletin boards, churches, and nearby apartment buildings and houses. List your events in the community calendars of local papers, local access cable, and radio stations. Most important, get your friends to tell three friends who tell three friends and so on. Nothing works like word of mouth and networking.

Delegate Responsibilities and Develop Expertise
Have one person in your group deal with the custodial staff and principal, another with coordinating volunteers, a third with publicity. Having one person consistently responsible for something lets him or her build specific skills and useful relationships.

Say Thank You
People will be happy to help you next time if you sincerely, publicly, and frequently thank them this time. When in doubt, give people more credit than they deserve.

Build on Your Successes
Repeat annual events; it’s easier the next time. People know to expect it, and you begin to build traditions that lead to larger participation each year. Try to do at least one event each season to maintain your schoolyard’s connection with the community.

*Adapted from “Keys to a Successful, Easier Event” by Partnerships for Parks. Partnerships for Parks is a joint program of CityParks Foundation and New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. www.partnershipsforparks.org.
## Event Planning Timetable

Specific events require particular steps, such as contracting musicians or buying arts and crafts supplies. Following is a general guideline to help you map out the basic steps entailed in putting on a general event.

### At least six months in advance:
- If the event requires your group to raise funds, identify sources of support and reach out to them. Grant programs and corporate sponsorships often have long turnaround times, and you don’t want to be caught out without support for the event.

### At least two months in advance:
- Form an organizing committee and delegate tasks: publicity, fundraising, volunteer recruitment.
- Choose a date for the event.
- Alert your community board and elected officials if you'd like them to attend.
- Contact any professional artists and performers; their schedules will book up quickly for summer weekends.
- Partner with other community groups to co-sponsor the event.
- Talk to elected officials and your community board for support. Your community board can advertise your event to its mailing list, but contact the board early if you'd like them to do this.

### At least one month in advance:
- Solicit in-kind donations from local businesses.
- Recruit volunteers to work at the event.

- For large events, start advertising with posters at local businesses and other community hubs. Attend meetings of other community groups to make announcements.
- Contact local newspapers to list the event in their calendars. Check deadlines carefully; different papers have different rules.
- Send invitations to elected officials, community leaders, civic groups, etc.

### Two weeks in advance:
- Publicize the event by hanging flyers in the neighborhood, via email, and by word of mouth.
- Confirm everything: performers, sound system, food, volunteers.
- Send a press advisory to local papers announcing the event.
- Remind VIPs by phone.
- Be in close contact with police, co-sponsor (if any), and any other partner agencies.

### On the day of the event:
- Meet with all of your volunteers before the event for a short orientation. Make sure everyone knows what they’re doing and where they should be.
- When assigning tasks to volunteers, designate clean-up as well so that people don’t just disappear and leave you alone at the end of the day. If the playground is left a mess, you will not endear yourself to the custodial staff, who may be less likely to help with future events.
- If there are safety issues, make sure all of your volunteers are aware of them. If kids will be participating,
assign someone to keep track of them at all times.

• Set up a table with information about the group, a sign-in sheet, and a collections jar; never miss a chance to recruit new members. Have an outgoing, chatty volunteer sit at the table.

• Make sure someone from the event committee is always present to answer questions and deal with emergencies.

• If you loan out tools or anything else you need back, put a volunteer in charge of keeping track of them.

Follow-up:

• Thank everyone who helped: custodial staff, volunteers, teachers, and after-school groups. If you show your appreciation, you’ll get more help next time.

• Meet with the organizing committee to debrief and assess the event. Try to figure out how you can improve next time.

* Adapted from “Event Planning Timetable” by Partnerships for Parks. Partnerships for Parks is a joint program of CityParks Foundation and New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. www.partnershipsforparks.org

Delegating Responsibility*

The larger an event, the harder it is for just one person to run. An event-planning committee helps ensure that different tasks are assigned to different people. This structure allows individuals to develop expertise and contacts in particular fields.

The following is a suggested breakdown of tasks to delegate.

Although no event will require all these tasks (some are for volunteer events, some for entertainment events), it helps in planning to think of the different categories of tasks an event entails.

Plan event:

• Spruce up playground
• Identify what work needs to be done
• Determine how many volunteers are needed
• Acquire supplies
• Schedule the day’s activities

Performance/fair:

• Choose the activities
• Contract with performers
• Solicit donations
• Arrange logistics

Pre-event publicity:

• Customize posters and flyers
• Post flyers around the community
• Make announcements at community meetings
• Answer requests for more information

Volunteer recruitment:

• Call through the membership list to recruit people to help out at the event
• Seek volunteers from other partner groups

Network:

• Keep important contacts (fundurers, partners, etc.) in the loop
• Act as a liaison to elected officials, your community board, and other community groups
Keep track of tools and supplies:
• Distribute supplies to volunteers
• Collect them at the end of the day

Staff the information table:
• Collect and photocopy information about your “Friends of” group
• Obtain and set up a table
• Answer questions about the group
• Make sure everyone signs in and new people fill out recruitment cards

Supervise volunteers:
• Make sure everyone has a task to do and the tools they need; teach volunteers how to perform their assigned tasks and to be safe

Take photographs:
• You’ll enjoy a visual record of your event
• Photographs also make great additions to grant proposals or reports on how grant money was spent

Clean-up:
• Clean up
• Put things away
• Take down flyers

Follow-up:
• Send thank-you notes to funders and supporters
• Water and weed new plants
• Pay performers
• Add new volunteers to your mailing list

* Adapted from “Delegating Responsibility” by Partnerships for Parks. Partnerships for Parks is a joint program of CityParks Foundation and New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. www.partnershipsforparks.org.
Worksheet for Planning an Event

Use this worksheet to help you think through the nuts and bolts of planning an event.

Description of event you would like to organize:

Adult participants—how many and who (i.e., daycare staff, teachers, parents, community members, volunteers from another organization):

Youth participants—how many and who (i.e., neighborhood kids, after-school program/daycare center participants, at-risk teens from another program):

Ages of youth participants:

Do youth need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian?

Schedule:

Date and time:

Activities:

Materials needed:

Where will you get materials?

Will you need clean-up supplies? (hose, bucket, soap, broom, etc.)

Will refreshments be served? (identify who will provide this)

Will you need to do outreach, such as posting fliers or contacting community groups?
For small-scale art projects, work with your school’s art instructors to plan a playground mural or mosaic. Contact Materials for the Arts for free materials (www.mfta.org).

Outside Grants for Art Projects

The New York City and New York State arts councils annually grant money to borough arts councils, which, in turn, regrant the funds to community groups. The grants can be used to support all kinds of arts programs: concerts, theater, dance, storytelling, arts and crafts for kids, public art, murals. Each borough council has a different application and a different deadline. To find out more about the program in your borough, contact:

• Bronx Council on the Arts
  www.bronxarts.org, 718.931.9500
• Brooklyn Arts Council
  www.brooklynartscouncil.org, 718.625.0080
• Lower Manhattan Cultural Council
  www.lmcc.net, 212.219.9401
• Queens Council on the Arts
  www.queenscouncilarts.org, 718.647.3377
• Council on the Arts and Humanities for Staten Island
  www.statenislandarts.org, 718.447.3329

For larger-scale mural projects, you may want to hire an outside artist or organization. Following are a few resources.

Suzanne Goldenberg
gold_suz@yahoo.com, 646.436.6411

Suzanne is a New York City–based artist who has worked with students to create murals at TPL playgrounds since 2003. She is especially gifted at working with students to develop drawings as the basis for mural-sized art. Examples of mural projects Suzanne led can be seen in the garden at P.S. 64X, 1425 Walton Avenue, the Bronx, and in the garden courtyard at Central Park East, 1573 Madison Avenue at 106th Street, Harlem. Her fees range from $5,000 to $15,000, depending on the number of sessions with students and the scale of the project.

Groundswell
www.groundswellmural.org/, 718.254.9782

Groundswell is a well-established organization for larger wall projects that has worked with communities and schools across the city since 1996. Groundswell did the vibrant mural at the TPL playground at P.S. 176K, 1225 Bay Ridge Avenue, Brooklyn, among many others. The average cost of projects is $10,000 to $15,000 but will vary according to the scope. For information, email director@groundswellmural.org.
CITYarts, Inc.  
www.cityarts.org/programs.html,  
212.966.0377  
CITYarts is a nonprofit group that brings children together with professional artists to create public art, often murals, to transform and build pride in their communities. The organization works with communities and schools on funding and may be interested in partnering with your school for a mural project in your community playground. You can see examples of past projects at its Web site. Contact Executive Director Tsipi Ben-Haim.

New York Cares  
nycares.org, 212.228.5000  
New York Cares is a volunteer organization that puts public-minded New Yorkers to work revitalizing public spaces, including schoolyards.
New trees, and in some cases, gardens, have recently been planted in your schoolyard. Trees and gardens not only beautify public spaces, they reduce pollution, provide shade, and often serve as the only nature experience for city dwellers. For students, trees and gardens provide a rich lab for hands-on learning about life sciences—learning that can foster lifelong appreciation and stewardship of the natural world.

But in a public space, trees and plants are especially vulnerable. Like young children, young trees and plants require careful tending to grow to healthy maturity. Encouraging students and community members to take ownership of individual trees or garden plots through group planting and maintenance activities will ensure your new green elements thrive for years to come. In this section, we share ideas for making this happen, along with basic guides to tree and garden care, organizational tools, student activities, and free or low-cost horticultural resources. It will help you dig in and make the most of the green in your playground.
Trees in Your New Playground

Trees soften and beautify the playground, making it more inviting. They provide shade, screen unpleasant views, act as sound barriers, and best of all, clean and cool our air. They also help reduce runoff during storms and slow climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide that causes the greenhouse effect. But urban trees face special challenges:

• Small growing space and limited soil volume
• Air pollution
• Compacted soil that prevents flow of oxygen and water to roots
• Extremes of temperature
• Vandalism and accidents

According to Trees New York’s “Citizen Pruner Course” manual, “It takes five years to plant a tree: one hour to actually put the tree in the soil and the remainder to ensure that the tree establishes itself properly.” The tree species planted in your schoolyard were selected for their hardiness and ability to adapt to varying environmental conditions, but they will need your help to get established and thrive in a schoolyard environment. This section will guide you and your students in becoming confident playground tree stewards, greatly increasing the chances that your new trees grow to be tall and healthy.

Million Trees NYC and Schoolyards-to-Playgrounds

The inclusion of trees in your new playground reflects the PlaNYC 2030 goal of creating a more sustainable New York while planting the seeds of environmental stewardship in the next generation of schoolchildren. In fact, trees are such an important part of PlaNYC that the mayor’s office has committed to planting 1 million new trees by 2017. Every tree planted in your yard counts as part of that million. As of June 2010, over 360,000 new trees have been planted. Under the Department of Parks & Recreation, MillionTreesNYC is working to plant every available street tree location across the city—including new street trees surrounding your schoolyard. For a complete guide to adopting and caring for trees in your neighborhood, download the TreeLC Handbook at http://www.milliontreesnyc.org/html/planting/tree_planting_and_care.shtml.
**Terminology for Tree Stewards**

**HABIT**
The characteristic growth pattern or silhouette of a tree's branches.

**STAKES AND GUY WIRES**
Used to assist a tree's stability and to protect it from being knocked over by wind or people during its first year of growth. Stakes and guy wires should be removed after tree is established, e.g., after one year.

**TREE-GATOR**
A plastic drip irrigation cone that wraps around trunk and sits on top of the root ball to allow gradual saturation of roots with little or no runoff.

**TREE PIT**
A square, rectangular or round-shaped planting hole in which the tree and root ball are planted.

**HAND CULTIVATOR**
A fork-like tool used to break up soil so air and water can better reach roots.

**MULCH**
A layer of organic material (often wood chips or shredded bark) used to blanket the soil. Mulch inhibits weeds, keeps moisture in and enriches soil when organic matter breaks down.

**HUMUS**
Dark, fertile, partially decomposed organic matter that greatly enriches city soil.
**Tree Care Basics**

The first five years of a young tree’s life are critical to its lifespan and long-term health. There are four basic steps to help young trees get established and thrive in your playground.

**Water Weekly**

For the first few years, watering is the most important thing you can do for your trees. Water each tree 15-20 gallons once a week, May through October. Fill the tree-gator, pour three to four large buckets, or let the hose flow into the pit for about fifteen minutes. Water twice a week in July and August. Water slowly and deeply so that water does not run off onto the pavement. If it rains one inch or more in a week’s time, you do not need to water. Tear out and post the watering chart in the Appendix to help keep track.

**Cultivate and Fertilize the Soil**

Cultivating or loosening soil allows water and oxygen to better reach trees’ roots. Using a hand cultivator or spading fork, gently rake over the top two to three inches. Break up large lumps. Be careful not to damage shallow tree roots, which begin just a few inches below soil’s surface. Once loosened, enhance the soil by mixing in a two-inch layer of humus, compost, or new topsoil. Do this at least once a year (usually early April) during the growing season; finish with a layer of mulch.

**Mulch**

Mulching is one of the most simple and beneficial things you can do for your trees. New trees will have a layer of mulch installed when they are planted. Once it has worn away, spread a new layer two to three inches deep over the tree pit to keep moisture in and weeds down.

Mulch twice a year, in spring and fall, after cultivating and fertilizing. Be sure to leave a six-inch well with no mulch around the trunk of the tree, as extra mulch or soil piled around the base can cause the bark to rot.

**Protect the Tree from Harm**

Teach students and community members to become tree stewards by learning tree biology and the function of healthy, protective bark in supporting the life of trees. Bark can be damaged by accident, vandalism, or girdling, which is the removal of bark all around the tree. Bark damage or girdling blocks the transport of food and water around the tree and can eventually kill it, if severe enough. Find further tree care information at [www.milliontreesnyc.org/html/planting/tree_planting_and_care.shtml](http://www.milliontreesnyc.org/html/planting/tree_planting_and_care.shtml) and in the Resources section of this manual.
Don’t Destroy the Bark

Children tend to pick at or carve into tree bark. It is the most common hazard to the health of schoolyard trees. Teach them to refrain from this bad habit!

The bark is a tree’s most vulnerable body part above ground. Bark protects the cambium, a thin regenerative layer of cells that builds phloem to its barkside and xylem to its inside. Phloem cells carry food (sugars) made in the leaves to the branches, trunk and roots. Xylem cells carry water and minerals from the roots to the leaves. Inactive xylem cells make up the tree’s wood (heartwood and sapwood).

If the cambium is severed all the way around the tree (girdled), food cannot be carried to the roots and the tree will eventually die. (Guy wires can also girdle a tree, so be sure to have your custodian remove them before this becomes a problem.)

Other activities that will help your trees:

- Weed tree pits to keep competing plants out.
- Prune dead or damaged branches and suckers (tree branches growing out of base of trunk).
- Plant flowers in tree pits in passive areas of playground. When flowers wilt, it means your tree needs water too. But keep in mind that flowers compete with tree roots for soil resources. Please do not plant flowers within one foot of the tree trunk. When watering, be sure to provide enough for the tree, not just enough to perk up the flowers.
- Remove ice from playground without using salt. Tree roots are killed by rock salt used to melt snow. Try alternative materials such as calcium chloride* or 46 percent granular urea (available at hardware stores) to clear snow and ice.
- Keep tree pits clean. Garbage and litter block the movement of oxygen and water into the soil.
- Remove guy wires after one year. Guy wires and stakes help your new trees stand upright against wind and people while the roots get established. After one year, gently clip them off.

*Note that calcium chloride can damage colorseal paint. Try to avoid using it in these areas.
Help Create Tree Stewards
Get Students Involved

The more students feel a sense of ownership over their green spaces, the more they will respect and take care of them. Help make students feel like the trees belong to them by having them participate in their upkeep.

Adopt-A-Tree Activities

Have individual classes or groups “adopt” each of the new trees in your yard and be responsible for monitoring that tree’s growth and health throughout the year. Have the students:

• Make decorative tree identification signs, including common and scientific name, date planted, growth rate, leaf type, branches, flower, and fruit details. Learning names and characteristics of trees is an important step in caring for trees.
• Check the tree weekly for moisture level and weeds and ask the teacher to communicate with the custodian if the tree needs extra water outside of the usual schedule.
• Use the tree survey sheet (see Appendix) to identify, observe, and record tree attributes as they change over time, noting height, diameter, unusual shape, different types of bark, tree pit condition, damaged limbs or trunk, buds, fruit, flowers, and more.
• Help cultivate, fertilize, and mulch the tree in spring and fall.
• Plant bulbs in fall or annuals in spring.
• Educate other students about tree stewardship.

Keep Learning

There are many environmental groups, including TPL, Trees New York, New York Restoration Project, and MillionTreesNYC that offer free materials, time, and training in tree stewardship.

Contact outside groups to lead free tree-care workshops at your school. (See Environmental Education Resources on page 63.) Visit Trees New York (www.treesny.com/home.html) for educational resources and to obtain the following publications free of charge:

• Urban Leaf and Tree Handbook
• Adopt-A-Tree Flyer
• Tree Tips (English and Spanish)
• Urban Bud & Bark Handbook: A Guide to Winter Tree Identification
• Street Tree and Plaza Maintenance: A Guide for Commercial and Residential Building and Maintenance Personnel

Know Your Trees

The trees planted in your schoolyard are likely to be one of the following species. Can you identify them by leaf and fruit?

- **Ginkgo biloba**
- **Callery Pear** Pyrus calleryana
- **Japanese Zelkova** Zelkova serrata
- **Sargent Cherry** Prunus sargentii
- **Littleleaf Linden** Tilia cordata
- **Pin Oak** Quercus palustris
- **Eastern Redbud** Cercis canadensis
- **Dawn Redwood** Metasequoia glyptostroboides
- **Sawtooth Oak** Quercus acutissima
- **Serviceberry** Amelanchier canadensis
- **Willow Oak** Quercus phellos
- **Honeylocust** Gleditsia triacanthos
- **European Hornbeam** Carpinus betulus
- **Chinese Elm** Ulmus pumila
- **Japanese Pagoda Tree** Styrax japonicum
- **American Elm** Ulmus americana
Garden beds and landscaping features have been installed in some of the new playgrounds. Besides adding color and beauty to the urban landscape, school gardens provide a place for environmental education and community engagement. In this section, you'll find resources on organizing, planting, maintaining, and learning in the garden.

### Getting Organized

#### Form a Garden Group

Whether or not you have a science teacher, custodian, or parent who is passionate about gardens and willing to take leadership, it is important to have more than one person responsible for the programs, planting, and maintenance of the garden space. TPL has found that relying on a single individual, no matter how devoted, does not work in the long term. That wonderful person may move, become busy with other things, or get burned out, especially during the gardening-intensive summer months. While custodial staff will likely water trees, don’t leave the gardening duties all up to the custodians. The job of overseeing the care and planting of green spaces over a season requires the commitment and organization of a group of interested teachers, students, parents, and community members.

#### Identify a Garden Coordinator

This person will lead the garden group. Ideally, he or she will have a couple of periods a week free to work on garden-related tasks.

#### Sample tasks for garden coordinator:

- Assign plots to classes.
- Maintain a garden schedule of classes and volunteers, including for holidays and summer.
- Decide where to store materials and tools. Consider getting a small lockbox so summer garden volunteers have easier access to materials.
- Liaise with the custodian and volunteers about water, keys, and supplies storage. Know where water, hose, watering cans, and keys are kept, and decide who is allowed access.
- Obtain needed materials and tools. You can find sources for free or low-cost seeds, plants, tools, and educational materials listed in the Resources section on page 63. Divide up grant-writing and applications duties to secure material support.
- Identify what you need to learn and invite environmental groups to lead garden skill-building workshops for students and the community.

### Identify Potential Partners and Volunteers

Post a garden volunteer sign-up sheet at your playground opening celebration. If your playground is open already, hold a “Dirt Day” (see Events section), where community members are invited to come plant, weed, mulch, or do other projects to beautify the planting beds. Serve light refreshments and sign up volunteers.

Visit New York City Open Accessible Space Information System
Cooperative (OASIS) at www.oasinsnyc.net/gardens/resources.htm to find links to local community gardens, including contact information. These gardens and their members are potential partners.

Once you get your garden started, register your school garden with GreenThumb by visiting its Web site (www.greenthumbnyc.org) or by contacting Outreach Coordinator Rasheed Hislop: 212.788.8062, Rasheed.Hislop@parks.nyc.gov.

Get Your Principal’s Support
Coordinating a garden takes time and requires support from the principal. Don’t expect staff members to do it all in their free time. Freeing up one or two staff members for a couple of hours each week to work on garden-related tasks will make for happy, effective garden coordinators.

Meet Regularly
Meeting frequency depends upon the scope of your garden and gardening ambitions. Be sure to have the garden coordinator sit in on the playground committee meetings.

Plan for the Summer and Holidays
Students may make a wonderful start putting in plants and vegetable gardens in the spring, but who will keep up with the weeding, thinning, and watering these plants need during the high growing season of summer? When planning what to grow with students, be realistic about the capacity your garden group has to tend a garden during the summer months. After-school, summer school, or day camp programs are all potential summertime partners in garden care. Consider handing off garden care to a summer garden coordinator, such as a neighbor who can coordinate with an after-school group, a local green group (see Resources for help finding them), or a neighborhood garden club, all of whom might enjoy tending the garden when school is closed. Summer help is another reason to make contacts with these folks when setting up your garden committee.

Communicate with your custodian to find out if access to water, keys, and tools will change during the summer months.
Basic Garden Care Tips

When to Plant

See the NYC planting calendars in the Appendix or check individual seed packets for guidance. A few rules of thumb:

• Generally speaking, it’s best to plant perennials and cool-weather-tolerant seeds (i.e., spinach, chard, carrots, radishes, broccoli, greens, peas, and some lettuces) in early to mid-spring, when rains are frequent.
• Shrubs and trees can be planted in spring or in fall.
• Bulbs like daffodils, crocuses, and tulips should be planted in fall.

Label Plants

Clearly labeling all plants and seedbeds is a great help for sites shared by different groups. It is also the best strategy to distinguish between your planting and the weeds you should pull out.

Mulching

When transplanting or once seeds have come up, mulch carefully around plants to help control weeds and keep moisture in.

Watering

During a period without rain, the warmer it gets, the more often you need to water. During a dry spell, it is not unusual for flowers and small plants to need a good soaking every other day. The best time to water is early morning or early evening, not when the sun is high in the sky. Invest in a mister or sprayer for your hose; the full force of an unregulated water flow can knock over fragile plants. Children can water individual plants with a watering can.

Weeding

Weeds are fast growing, fast reproducing plants that can take over a space and steal resources from your preferred plants. As schoolyard gardens grow in small plots with limited soil and nutrients, it is essential to keep weeds down. Weeds left to grow wild will eventually kill some plants and stress others. They also make your site look messy and untended. Here are some guidelines for weeding:

• Before removing, be sure to identify plant as a weed! If you are unsure something is a weed, look around: if you see the same plant all over the garden, it is most likely a weed.
• Wear gloves and use a trowel to take out the entire root system; weeds grow back quickly if any part of their roots is left in the ground.
• If soil is very dry and compacted, weed removal is harder. Try to weed after a rain, or give the garden or tree pit a good soak. Weeds will pull out of wet soil more easily.
• Be on the lookout for poison ivy (leaves of three, shiny and reddish, in early spring) and any hazardous trash in the soil.
• Weed your site early in the fall before the weeds dry out and the seeds disperse.
What to Grow

The following list focuses on low-maintenance, tried-and-true plants for schoolyard gardens that students will help maintain. For more specific advice on what and when to plant, ask the staff at your local nursery when you go to buy plants.

First identify the conditions of your site:

• How much sun/shade does it get, and does it change during the year?
• Is the spot damp or wet?
• How much time can you spend tending to it?

*Tip: When starting out, we recommend planting larger patches of the same plant rather than small patches of many varieties.*

Native Plants

More than 2,000 plants are native to the greater New York City area, including grasses, flowering plants, shrubs, and trees. Native plants are likely to do well since they are used to local conditions. After they are established, they will require less watering than typical nursery choices because they are used to surviving on local rainfall. They can also provide critical food and habitat for native species birds and butterflies that are struggling for survival.

Flower Gardens

The color and beauty that flower gardens provide are enticing; but keep in mind that most need at least some sun and must be kept well-watered in hot weather. There are two types of flowering plants: annuals, which live for only one season and perennials, which die back in the fall and re-emerge in the spring. Annuals are fun for kids to plant each spring; perennials can provide showy color throughout the season.

Annuals you can start from seeds indoors in early spring (all sun-loving):

• Marigolds
• Zinnia
• Nasturtium—many species; can start from seed outdoors too
• Bachelor’s button or cornflower
• Sunflowers
• Cosmos
• Black-eyed Susans
• Calendula
• Larkspur
• Lavatera

Annuals to buy in pots or flats:

• Snapdragon
• Pansy—grow best in early spring and fall, shade tolerant
• Impatiens—sun or shade, very hardy
• Ageratum
• Cleome
• Coleus
• Nicotiana
• Petunia
• Salvia

Spring-flowering bulbs to plant in fall (can be planted in tree pits too):

• Crocus
• Daffodil
• Narcissus
• Tulip
Sun-loving perennials (pots or bulbs):
• Achillea filipendula (Fern leaf yarrow)
• Agastache foeniculum (Giant hyssop)
• Chrysanthemum—August-September bloom
• Coreopsis (Tickweed)
• Echinacea (Coneflower)—July bloom
• Hemerocallis (Daylily)—July bloom
• Heuchera (Coral bells)—May-June bloom
• Iris—May bloom
• Leucanthemum (Shasta daisy)
• Lilium Asiatic (Asiatic lily)—July bloom
• Monarda didyma (Bee balm)
• Paeonia (Peony)
• Phlox
• Rudbeckia (Black-eyed Susan)—July bloom
• Sedum (Stone crop)—July-August bloom
• Stachys byzantina (Lamb’s ear)

Shade-loving perennials:
• Alchemilla vulgaris, mollis (Lady’s mantle)
• Aster divaricatus (White wood aster)—fall blooming
• Aster laevis (Smooth aster)—fall blooming
• Helleborus—February-March bloom but green all year
• Hosta—July-August bloom
• Polygonatum commutatum (Solomon’s seal)—June bloom
• Ferns
• Woodland phlox

Small Shrubs
• Butterfly bush
• Hydrangea
• Potentilla
• Spirea
• Viburnum

Vegetable Gardens
The following vegetables are ideal for creating a children’s vegetable garden because they can be started from seeds outdoors and are easy to grow:
• Radish
• Carrot—Nantes and other varieties
• Pea—Sugar Snap, Bush Snapper
• Beans—bush or climbing beans
• Wheat—Hard Red Spring and other varieties
• Collards, kale
• Chard, beets
• Squash
• Pumpkin
• Spinach
• Lettuces

Vegetables to buy in pots or 6-packs:
• Tomatoes (require staking)
• Peppers
• Eggplant

Herbs:
• Mints
• Chives
• Common lavender
• Parsley
• Cilantro, coriander
• Basil
**Groundcovers**
Groundcovers are low-growing plants that spread quickly to form a dense cover. They are most often used on the following locations:

- Steep banks or slopes
- Shady areas under trees and next to buildings
- Underplantings in shrub borders and beds
- Very wet or very dry locations

**Perennial evergreen groundcovers:**
- Creeping myrtle, periwinkle vinca (Vinca minor)—shade; spring bloom but green all year

**Grasses**
Grasses are also great as groundcovers, requiring little maintenance and giving a natural look. They grow taller than traditional groundcovers. A couple of examples:

- Fountain grass (Pennisetum alopecuroides)—various cultivars, including ‘Little Bunny’
- Variegated ribbon grass (Phalaris arundinacea)

**Rain Gardens**
If your schoolyard has a drainage area from a downspout or a place where water collects at the low point of the yard, you may want to design a rain garden there.

Rain gardens are shallow depressions designed to soak up water and support trees, shrubs, and flowers that tolerate both wet and dry conditions. Native plants are recommended because they are more pest resistant than non-native, need no fertilizer, and provide habitat for birds and butterflies. Once established, the deep roots of native plants increase the water-holding capacity of the soil, hold it together, and prevent erosion*. Brooklyn Botanic Gardens has more information on rain gardens: [www.bbg.org/gar2/topics/design/2004sp_raingardens1.html](http://www.bbg.org/gar2/topics/design/2004sp_raingardens1.html).


**Seed Starting**
When should you start seeds indoors? That depends on the type of seed and the last expected frost date for your area. Frost dates are averages and are given as a range of dates. When to start your seeds is always a bit of a guess. Check your seed packet to see how many weeks’ growth are required before setting outdoors. Count back that many weeks from your last expected frost date to get an approximate date for starting those seeds. It’s approximate because weather does not always live up to predictions, but you’ll be in the ballpark. Different plants will require different timing, so use a calendar to mark down when to start what. Most of New York City is in Zone 6; Cornell University says the frost-free date is April 10–20.
Garden Activities for Students and Community Groups

For students:

• Invite conservation or gardening groups to run skill-building workshops at your school.

• Conduct soil investigations. Pre-K–6 can dig for worms and prepare soil by adding compost or organic soil. Grades 7–8 can visit www.gardenmosaics.org and click on “Science Pages” for soil-testing instruction sheets.

• Hunt for and identify insects. Release ladybugs and praying mantises, two beneficial insects that children can introduce into the garden while learning about what “good” insects do for our plants. (See Appendix for a praying mantis release worksheet.)

• Build and paint bird feeders.

For all ages:

• Hold Gardening Day activities for different age groups: plant annuals from seeds started indoors; plant bulbs in the fall; plant radishes, carrots, wheat, marigolds, green beans, peas, sunflowers, or other plants from seeds; transplant tomatoes or flowers; root plant cuttings; plant seeds in flats; stake peas or tomatoes; mulch; thin; weed; draw flowers, dead bees, leaf veins; copy names of vegetables or flowers on row markers.

• Hold Dirt Days, where students, teachers, parents, and volunteers gather at the garden after school and on weekends to help build, clean, and maintain the garden. Run both youth-oriented skill-building workshops and adult-oriented design-build projects. Adults can construct a tool shed or a bench.
School Garden Worksheet

Fall _________________ Spring _________________

Contact person for the garden: __________________________________________

Is there a schedule for garden use? Is it posted? Where?
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

Does everyone have keys to the gate and/or toolbox? ____
Who has the keys? __________________________________________
Have the keys been returned? ____

Are the necessary tools available? __________________________________________
Water: __________________________________________
Does everyone know how to turn it on? Yes or No
Have the barrels been refilled with water? Yes or No
Are there watering cans? Yes or No
Trowels? How many? __________________________________________
Gloves? How many? __________________________________________
Shovels? Yes or No
Rakes? Yes or No
Has everything been returned to its place? Yes or No

Is there a common time to have a meeting to keep everyone updated on activities? If yes, when is it? If no, can a time be made?
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

Are there areas of the garden that can be adopted by classes? Are there common areas that different classes can plant in? Are these areas labeled? __________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

Teachers involved and contact numbers:
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

Days and times classes will be gardening: __________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
TIPS FOR A CLEAN AND SAFE PLAYGROUND

P.S. 314 in Brooklyn. Photo by Seth Sherman.
TPL conducted an interview with the custodian of a renovated community playground at a public school in Bushwick, Brooklyn, which opened October 2006. The dialogue below will give you insight into his experience.

TPL: What amenities are in your yard?

Custodian: We have a synthetic turf field, a full basketball court, play equipment, painted games, a gazebo, game tables, a water fountain, benches, and trees.

TPL: Describe your daily and weekly cleaning routine. How many hours do you spend?

Custodian: My colleague and I spend about two hours a day cleaning the schoolyard. Our daily routine is to come in the morning before opening the playground and empty the garbage cans, sweep, and pick up all trash or broken glass with a broom and bucket. Once a week we also water the trees, do a more thorough cleaning of the turf field, and remove any graffiti. This might take us around six hours. Once a month we also do some weed whacking, and twice a year, before school starts and when it ends, we power-wash the pavement and equipment.

TPL: How do you maintain your turf field? What about removing difficult trash like glass or gum?

Custodian: For the turf I simply use a rake and blower. With the rake I bring all the trash to the surface and blow it off the field. Then I vacuum that trash from the ground around the turf. In the winter, when it snows, we let the snow sit on the turf but make sure to not plow any more snow onto it. This allows for it to melt more quickly and prevents it from turning into ice.

TPL: How has your workload changed since the schoolyard opened?

Custodian: My workload is basically the same as before. I used to spend two hours a day cleaning the yard before the renovation because we left the schoolyard open and the community used it. I spend a little more time on it now because it is a nice thing and I want to keep it clean.

TPL: Have you had trouble opening and closing the yard? What tactics have you developed for closing the yard?

Custodian: I never closed the yard at first because there were often gangs hanging out there when it was time to close. Now we have developed an understanding with some neighbors that really know this community. They have a key and close the yard. They also live across the street and keep a general watch over the yard when school is not in session.

TPL: Do you have any maintenance secrets or recommendations to give a custodian who is just starting out with a new space?

Custodian: We used to find six to twelve syringes in the schoolyard before the renovation, and now we find none. I think every schoolyard
should have a turf field; it’s easier to maintain than asphalt and is the most well-used amenity in this space.

TPL: Does anyone help you out with the maintenance? Do you delegate it to other staff?

Custodian: I basically do all the work with one other colleague.

TPL: Have you noticed any changes in how people, both in the school and community, perceive the space?

Custodian: The new yard, with all the different amenities that it offers, brings in more varied age groups. You see a lot more young children and families instead of older men. The crowd is generally more respectful. The community really appreciates [the yard]. When the neighbors saw that their yard was starting to be threatened by negative use, they took initiative and now play a big role in maintaining it and keeping an eye on it. Also, we recently had our school budgets cut and had less money for field trips at the end of this year. It was great to have the renovated schoolyard because the students just used that space for their field trips and field days. Nobody breaks in anymore, and the businesses across the street are doing really well because of the increased activity. It’s definitely brought up the neighborhood!
Small Actions that Make a Big Impact*

Negative users move into spaces that nobody else cares about. Therefore, the most important thing you can do is to send a message that you care. Small actions can turn your playground into a place that is no longer inviting to negative elements.

Clean Up
Though your custodial staff will clean your playground regularly, they can’t be there all the time. Any help you can give will make a tremendous difference. Broken glass, litter, and weeds are all signs that your playground has been abandoned. Make it clear to everybody that the community has come back to the playground by cleaning it up.

Paint Over Graffiti
The best way to discourage graffiti artists is by removing graffiti as fast as it goes up. The Department of Education has a zero-tolerance policy for graffiti: it must be cleaned off or painted over within 24 hours. Whenever you see graffiti, report it to 311 or contact your custodian. Your group can also apply to the mayor’s Anti-Graffiti Task Force for painting supplies to use to cover up graffiti you see on weekends or evenings. Call 311 for more information. Refer to Graffiti Removal Specifications in the Appendix for step-by-step instructions.

Address Vandalized Equipment
Just like litter and graffiti, broken equipment sends a negative message about your playground. If you know who the vandals are and when they normally act, report all the information to your local police precinct. Talk to your custodian to get vandalized equipment repaired.

Discourage Negative Activities
Make problem users feel unwanted. One parks group in Manhattan hung a banner in its park that says, “Drug Dealers Keep Out!” Students at P.S. 503/506K hung a huge banner that says, “Keep Our Playground Clean.” A group in the Bronx “staked out” its park by eating breakfast at a visible spot every morning. That same group politely, nonthreateningly cleaned up the trash around the feet of pot-smoking teenagers who had become a problem. Don’t let problems fester. Let your custodian know when you see trash, broken glass, or graffiti. However, you don’t have to wait to do something; sometimes you can address a problem yourself faster than he or she can.

Remove Undergrowth
Crimes, especially drinking, drug dealing, and prostitution, most often happen out of public view, sometimes under the cover of overgrown plants. If your playground’s undergrowth is out of control, ask your custodian to remove it. Community groups can also help organize a large-scale cleanup to remove persistent undergrowth; your group can then help maintain the cleared area.
Post Playground Rules

If the playground’s rules are clearly marked, most people will follow them. It’s a lot easier to ask people to stop doing something if you can point to an official sign that prohibits their actions. Make sure signs are posted in a prominent place near an entrance and kept free from graffiti.

Tell People Whom to Call About a Problem

Create a leaflet listing the action numbers that people should call when they notice a problem: the precinct’s community affairs office, the precinct community council, the community board, city council members, and other elected officials. Distribute the leaflet far and wide. One group created a civilian observation patrol and gave leaflets to everyone their patrol met in the park—more than 1,000 people.

* Adapted from “Small Actions that Make a Big Impact” by Partnerships for Parks. Partnerships for Parks is a joint program of CityParks Foundation and New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. www.partnershipsforparks.org.
Understand the Department’s Structure

Your precinct is made up of several units of officers, led by sergeants. All units are under the direction of the precinct’s commanding officer (CO). These units serve different purposes. Some cover a beat, while others look into specific kinds of crimes, including quality-of-life crimes and narcotics. Each precinct has two community affairs officers who are specifically responsible for interacting with the public. Community affairs officers run the precinct community council, can help you form observation patrols, and issue noise permits for community events. Each precinct also has a community policing unit that tries to prevent regular crimes from recurring by patrolling problem areas at problem times.

Make Friends

The police will be more likely to respond quickly if they know and respect you. Get to know the officers who work in your precinct, particularly the officers who work in your neighborhood, the community affairs officers, the commanding and executive officers, the community policing unit supervisor, and, if relevant, the narcotics officers. These relationships are crucial to solving problems in your park. The best way to build these relationships is to attend monthly meetings of the precinct community council, which is a forum for police–community interaction.

Understand the Precinct’s Limitations

Precincts have limited resources. They cannot assign an officer to stand in your playground 24 hours a day, and they must respond to emergencies before they respond to nuisances. That said, the police exist to make your neighborhood safe, and the more closely your group works with them, the more positive the outcome will be. The police must have just cause in order to arrest someone; usually that means they must see him or her committing a crime. For minor crimes, like loitering or littering, it is much more common for the police to issue warnings and fines than to make arrests.

Call Repeatedly

The police allocate more resources to the areas that receive the highest number of formal complaints. If you call about a nuisance once, you may not get much response, but if you call about it repeatedly, the chances of action increase. For the best results, have all of your neighbors and group members call too. Be polite; remember that you are trying to build relationships.

Take Notes

Every time you call the police, make a record of your call. Write down the date and time, the name of the person with whom you spoke, the number assigned to your complaint, and the details of the complaint. Make a record of any follow-up. These notes will be essential if you ever need to request more resources or complain about an insufficient response.

* Adapted from “Working with the Police” by Partnerships for Parks. Partnerships for Parks is a joint program of CityParks Foundation and New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. www.partnershipforparks.org.
Maintenance

Maintenance questions should be directed to the Department of Education’s Division of School Facilities, or DSF (718.349.5799, www.opt-osfns.org/dsf). It is responsible for the maintenance, repair, and safe operation of all facilities under the jurisdiction of the city’s school system. The deputy directors of facilities oversee school custodial staff. You can find Integrated Service Center (ISC) specific contact information for your deputy director of facilities by visiting the Web site above, clicking the Contact Us link on the left, then clicking the ISC Contact List link at the bottom.

How does the custodian get reimbursed for the extra hours he or she works to maintain the yard? Who is responsible for cleaning?

The Department of Education’s school custodial teams are responsible for cleaning and maintaining these areas. Each selected site has been allocated approximately $50,000 in additional operation and maintenance funds. This funding allows up to four extra hours of operational work per day, seven days per week. This breaks down into two hours in the morning to open and clean the area and two hours in the evening to close and secure the space. In addition, custodial staff may be reimbursed up to three hours per week to perform general maintenance repairs. All hours claimed by custodian engineers must be indicated on the corresponding PO1. Custodian engineers and building managers are to contact their deputy director of facilities for details prior to claiming these expenses.

How does the custodian maintain the turf?

The Parks Department will turn over maintenance manuals for all products installed in the schoolyard to the school custodian. This should include a manual and warranty for the synthetic turf. Common practice is to use a rake and blower. With the rake you bring all the trash to the surface and then blow it off the field. In the winter, when it snows, let the snow sit on the turf and make sure to not plow any more snow onto it. That allows it to melt more quickly and prevents it from turning into ice.

What if we find graffiti in the schoolyard?

The best way to deal with graffiti is to remove it or paint over it immediately, in order to not attract any more. For more information, see Graffiti Removal Specifications in the Appendix.

What if something is vandalized or equipment breaks?

Contact your custodian. Most products have warranties, and the specific manufacturer can likely be contacted for repairs.

Operations

When should my schoolyard be open to the public?

All PlaNYC sites are to be open from 8 a.m. until dusk when school is not in session. This includes all school
Can I install security cameras in my schoolyard?

You may be able to receive funding for security cameras in your schoolyard. Contact the School Construction Authority and seek out your local council member for Reso-A funds.

Who can we contact for help if we are experiencing a lot of negative use in the off-hours and are considering closing the yard?

You should first reach out to folks within the Department of Education, such as your DSF district supervisor, the local Integrated Service Center, or the School Support Organization. (See p. 57 for a full list of resources within the Department of Education.) Other groups and people to whom you should reach out include:

- Police precinct—Each precinct has monthly community council meetings
- Community board
- Council member
- Borough president

Safety and Security

What is the procedure if there is an accident in the yard after school hours?

The school should fill out an accident report per normal procedure, even for incidents that occur when school is not in session.

What if people refuse to leave the yard at closing time or if the custodian feels unsafe closing the yard?

School custodians should never put themselves in danger. If one feels unsafe closing the yard, he or she should leave it open and let the local police precinct and district supervisor know about the incident. Users who do not respect the rules and regulations of the schoolyard are subject to the jurisdiction of the police department.

Can I install security cameras in my schoolyard?

You may be able to receive funding for security cameras in your schoolyard. Contact the School Construction Authority and seek out your local council member for Reso-A funds.

Who can we contact for help if we are experiencing a lot of negative use in the off-hours and are considering closing the yard?

You should first reach out to folks within the Department of Education, such as your DSF district supervisor, the local Integrated Service Center, or the School Support Organization. (See p. 57 for a full list of resources within the Department of Education.) Other groups and people to whom you should reach out include:

- Police precinct—Each precinct has monthly community council meetings
- Community board
- Council member
- Borough president

Safety and Security

What is the procedure if there is an accident in the yard after school hours?

The school should fill out an accident report per normal procedure, even for incidents that occur when school is not in session.

What if people refuse to leave the yard at closing time or if the custodian feels unsafe closing the yard?

School custodians should never put themselves in danger. If one feels unsafe closing the yard, he or she should leave it open and let the local police precinct and district supervisor know about the incident. Users who do not respect the rules and regulations of the schoolyard are subject to the jurisdiction of the police department.
Additional Site Maintenance Tips

Remove graffiti immediately after it is discovered.

Touch up paint on all signs, gates, and railings.

Touch up paint on all play equipment and basketball goals.

Touch up paint on all benches and game tables and check all fastenings.

Inspect all drainage structures to make sure they are free from debris.

Inspect the safety surface for any torn or worn-out areas. Replace mats as necessary.

Inspect the color seal coating (painted asphalt) and touch up paint as necessary.

Inspect basketball backstops to make sure they are in good condition. Tighten bolts as necessary.

When removing snow:
• Do not use rock salt as an abrasive for ice conditions in the playground area. Rock salt causes irreparable damage to concrete, trees and plants, clothing, carpet, and furniture.
• Alternatives to rock salt include sand and calcium chloride.
• Do not stockpile snow near entries. Stockpile snow on the outer edges of the property and not along the building or service-entry edge.
• Catch basins should be hand-cleared as necessary to provide quick drainage of the schoolyard and to help eliminate ice buildup.
• Repair any damage due to snow removal immediately in the spring.
• Exercise caution when working on color sealed areas; chains on tractors used to clear snow will damage color seal coat.
P.S. 180 in Harlem.
Photo by Avery Wham.
A good place to start with any operational support questions is your school’s assigned Integrated Service Center (ISC) or contracted School Support Organizations (SSO). These organizations can provide a number of services, including youth development and operational services. The ISC Office of Youth Development may be helpful if you are trying to form a new partnership or address a current relationship with a community-based organization. The ISC Director of School Facilities may be helpful if you are addressing custodial questions or playground maintenance issues. You can find out to which ISC or SSO your school belongs by conferring with your principal. Additionally, your school’s Learning Support Organization (LSO) or Partnership Support Organization (PSO) may have instructional materials or could point you toward specific teaching and learning resources that can help you educate students and staff about your new playground’s ecology, care, and stewardship. Following is the contact information for these organizations.

### Integrated Service Centers (ISC)

- **Bronx:** One Fordham Plaza; general number - 718.741.7070
- **Brooklyn:** 131 Livingston Street; general number - 718.935.3400
- **Staten Island:** 715 Ocean Terrace; general number - 718.556.8300
- **Manhattan:** 333 Seventh Avenue; general number - 212.356.3700
- **Queens:** 28-11 Queens Plaza North; general number - 718.391.8222

### Division of School Facilities


### School Support Organizations (SSO)

- [schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/schools/support/default.htm](http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/schools/support/default.htm)

### Empowerment Support Organization (ESO)

- 212.374.7929, [schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Empowerment/default.htm](http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Empowerment/default.htm)

### Learning Support Organizations (LSOs)

- **Community Learning Support Organization** - 718.935.3701, [www.community-lso.org](http://www.community-lso.org)
- **Integrated Curriculum and Instruction Learning Support Organization** - 718.391.6500, [www.icilso.org](http://www.icilso.org)
- **Knowledge Network Learning Support Organization** - 718.642.5800, [www.knowledgenetworklso.org](http://www.knowledgenetworklso.org)
- **Leadership Learning Support Organization** - 718.828.2440, [www.llsonycdoe.org](http://www.llsonycdoe.org)

### Partnership Support Organizations (PSOs)

- **Academy for Educational Development** - 212.367.4594, [www.middlestart.org](http://www.middlestart.org)
- **Center for Educational Innovation—Public Education Association (CEI-PEA)** - 212.302.8800, [www.ceipeaschools.org/](http://www.ceipeaschools.org/)
- **City University of New York (CUNY)** - 646.344.7241, [schoolsupport.cuny.edu/](http://schoolsupport.cuny.edu/)
Following are other offices within the Department of Education that might also prove useful.

Office of the Arts and Special Projects (OASP)
212.374.0300, schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/arts/index2.html
OASP has a variety of resources for school art programs, including an arts and cultural education services guide, curriculum blueprints, professional development courses, programs for kids, art events at reduced prices, and scholarship and grant opportunities. It also supports Materials for the Arts (718.729.3001, www.mfta.org), which distributes art supplies taken from donors to schools for free.

Office of Fitness and Health Education
212.374.0254, schools.nyc.gov/Academics/FitnessandHealth/default.htm
This office oversees fitness and health education programs in public schools, including the integration of NYC Fitnessgram and C.H.A.M.P.S. Middle School Sports and Fitness League. It has great resources for integrating physical fitness into the school day and starting extracurricular programs around fitness.

Office of Family Engagement and Advocacy (OFEA)
212.374.2323, schools.nyc.gov/Offices/OFEA/default.htm
OFEA is the primary point of contact for families and parent leaders who have concerns about their schools, and it also supports the city’s school-based and district-based parent leadership associations.

Public Art for Public Schools (PAPS)
schools.nyc.gov/Offices/SCA/Programs/PAPS/default.htm
This program commissions art for new school buildings and protects and
conserves existing artwork. It includes programs where students can work with artists to create an original work of art for their school.

Other City Resources

Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit (CAU)

CAU is the direct link between the mayor and New York’s many diverse communities. It plays a pivotal role in improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers by working with neighborhood organizations and various city agencies to tackle large-scale and individual issues. Along with borough directors, CAU is actively involved in carrying forward the mayor’s city- and borough-wide initiatives.

Community Boards
Community boards are local representative bodies. There are 59 throughout the city. Each board consists of up to 50 unsalaried members appointed by the borough president, with half nominated by the city council members who represent the community district. Board members are selected by the borough presidents from among active, involved people of each community, with an effort made to ensure that every neighborhood is represented. Board members must reside, work, or have some other significant interest in the community. Find your local community board’s contact information at www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/directory.shtml.

City Council
The City Council is the city’s legislative body. There are 51 elected council members, one from each council district. Besides enacting legislation, including tax and revenue measures, the City Council approves the city’s budget and has oversight powers on the activities of city agencies. The council also has the power to review many land use actions of the City Planning Commission. It is also a good source of funding for projects to improve your playground or to start a program. Find your local city council member at council.nyc.gov/html/home/home.shtml.

Borough Presidents
Borough presidents must be consulted in the preparation of the mayor’s executive budget. They may reallocate certain resources within the borough after budget adoption, prepare a strategic policy statement for their boroughs, monitor service delivery and complaint handling by city agencies, introduce legislation to the council, propose changes in the zoning resolution, review contracts and franchises, and appoint a member for their boroughs to the City Planning Commission. Borough presidents are important participants in land use review and in the “Fair Share” process for locating city facilities. Links to each borough president’s Web site follow:

• Manhattan - www.mbpo.org/
• Brooklyn - www.brooklyn-usa.org/
• Bronx - bronxboropres.nyc.gov/
• Queens - www.queensbp.org/
• Staten Island -
  www.statenislandusa.com/molinaro.html

New York City
Police Department

It is a great idea to get acquainted with your local precinct and community affairs officer. Find your precinct and their contact information at www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/precinct_maps/precinct_maps.shtml.
Environmental Education Resources

**Starting a School Garden**

*Inch by Inch, Row by Row: A Garden Overview For Teachers and Parents*
Smithsonian Institution—Seeds of Change Garden
www.mnh.si.edu/archives/garden/seasons/garden_overview.html
This great, compact guide for starting an educational garden has step-by-step advice on every topic, from goal-setting and fundraising to garden care activities geared to each season.

The School Garden Wizard
Chicago Botanic Garden
www.schoolgardenwizard.org
A rich resource on all aspects of implementing a school garden, the wizard provides information on analyzing your site, forming a garden team, curricular resources, and year-round maintenance tips. It includes links to national science standards.

New York City Open Accessible Space Information System Cooperative (OASIS)
www.oasisnyc.net/gardens/resources.htm
OASIS is an interactive mapping site that contains links to local community gardens and information about starting a community garden and where to get supplies.

**Materials/Workshop/Advice**

GreenThumb
212.788.8070, www.greenthumbnyc.org
A division of the New York Department of Parks & Recreation, GreenThumb supports school and community gardens through workshops and events that provide free materials and technical assistance. Your school must register its garden with GreenThumb and a school representative must attend a workshop to collect materials. Find the Quarterly Program Guide on the GreenThumb Web site. Outreach Coordinator Rasheed Hislop has set up an online group where school gardeners can share experiences, resources, concerns, questions, and ideas. Click on NYC School Gardening Group on GreenThumb’s front page.

Brooklyn Botanic Gardens (BBG)
718.623.7250, www.bbg.org
As well as providing an extraordinary display of plants at its Brooklyn site, BBG’s Web site contains a plethora of helpful advice and tip sheets on all aspects of growing plants and making beautiful gardens.

The Horticultural Society of New York (HSNY)
212.757.0915, www.hsny.org
HSNY runs a Horticulture Hotline, where the director of horticulture answers horticultural questions (212.757.0915 x 115, hsny@hsny.org) and a blog (hsny.blogspot.com) where reader questions are answered weekly. HSNY’s Apple Seed (www.hsny.org/html/appleseed.htm) is a horticultural and environmental educational program that provides hands-on activities and exploratory plant studies for grades K-6. Apple Seed makes a two-year commitment to each school.
and provides all materials and on-site instruction, including field trips. It is an approved Department of Education vendor and has had Out-of-School Time-funded contracts. A typical program costs about $5,000. Contact Pamela Ito, Director of Children’s Education, 212.757.0915 x 106.

National Gardening Association (NGA)  
800.538.7476, www.garden.org  
NGA is a nonprofit leader in plant-based education whose mission is to promote home, school, and community gardening as a means to renew and sustain essential connections among people, plants, and the environment. The Adopt a School Garden Program links registered school gardens to funds, materials, and technical assistance from corporate and individual donors.

Grow NYC (formerly Council on the Environment of New York City)  
212.788.7900, www.cenyc.org  
Grow NYC supports two community garden assistance programs:  

- Open Space Greening Program (212.788.7935, www.cenyc.org/openspace). This program operates a “Grow Truck” that traverses all five boroughs to deliver garden tools (on loan), supplies, (soil and donated plants), and horticultural advice to community and school garden groups.  
- The Plant-A-Lot (PAL) Project works with organized groups and individuals to build, maintain, and rejuvenate community gardens and other neighborhood open spaces. It provides technical advice (design, construction, planting advice) and material assistance (soil, trees, flowers, vegetables, benches, tables, gazebos, and more) to community gardens and helps maintain gardens that were created with PAL assistance in prior years.

Trees New York (TNY)  
212.227.1887, www.treesny.org  
Trees New York is an environmental and urban forestry nonprofit that works with city communities to plant, preserve, and protect New York’s trees and neighborhoods through education and active citizen participation. TNY’s excellent programs include the following:  

- Trees New York’s Citizen Pruner Tree Care Course (for adults) trains New Yorkers in tree care and pruning. The course consists of eight hours of classroom training and four hours of hands-on experience in the field. Classes are held in the spring and fall of each year and are offered in all five boroughs. The course fee is $100 and includes a comprehensive manual and other materials.  
- TNY recently launched youth and school programs that provide customized, age-appropriate curriculum to help students expand their awareness of trees and the urban environment and become responsible stewards. Contact Cheryl Blaylock, Director of Youth Programs, 212.227.1887, Cheryl@treesny.org.
in botany, geology, ecology, entomology, conservation, and ornithology. Rangers teach people to care for the environment. Programs take place in nature centers in city parks or staff can come to your classroom or playground.

• GreenApple Corps leads hands-on service learning projects to restore and maintain natural areas and street trees throughout New York City. The group has worked with schools to provide environmental education to grades K–5 and has established a school-based community garden at P.S. 50 in the Bronx.

CityParks Foundation

CityParks’ Learning Gardens program creates community gardens in city parks as centers for environmental education programs for schoolchildren and community members, such as senior and day care centers, families, and community organizations. It serves more than 2,850 community members, children, and teachers through school, out-of-school, and summer programs.

New York Department of Parks & Recreation Partnerships Organizations
www.nycgovparks.org/sub_about/parks_divisions/pd_divisions.html

• Urban Park Rangers is a division of the parks department. Its mission is to link New Yorkers to the natural world through programs
hosts after-school groups for hands-on natural science workshops and provides teacher training, in-class visits, and lesson plans on local environmental issues. Lesson plans emphasize activities you can bring into classrooms. Programs include urban gardening, waste prevention, recycling, composting, and climate change. LESEC will come to schools in all five boroughs.

**Urban Kid Adventurers**
646.436.5885, [www.urbankidadventurers.com](http://www.urbankidadventurers.com)

Urban Kid Adventurers is a child-based nature program designed to get children outside. Children learn to identify birds, trees, flowers, and plants and record their work using journals and digital cameras. This documentation goes into a field guide made at the end of the course. The main objective is to have fun outdoors. Tag games and just running around and rolling in the grass is an integral part of the course. Contact Thom, [urbankidadventurers@yahoo.com](mailto:urbankidadventurers@yahoo.com).

**Smithsonian Institution**
Butterfly Habitat Garden
[www.si.edu/gardens/butterfly/smith.htm](http://www.si.edu/gardens/butterfly/smith.htm)

Web site information includes Fun Facts about Butterflies, How to Create Your Own Butterfly Garden, the Butterfly-Plant Relationship, Traits of a Good Butterfly Plant, Beneficial Insects, and more. Note: Follow the arrows from section to section.

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**Groups Serving Specific Boroughs**

**Brooklyn**

**Brooklyn Botanic Gardens**
1000 Washington Avenue, Brooklyn NY 11225, 718.623.7250, [www.bbg.org](http://www.bbg.org)

This organization has various programs:

- **GreenBridge** ([718.623.7250](tel:718.623.7250), [www.bbg.org/edu/greenbridge/](http://www.bbg.org/edu/greenbridge/)), the community horticultural program of BBG, is designed to share knowledge, resources, and materials with Brooklyn gardens, including school gardens. GreenBridge can help you start new gardening projects or continue existing programs. The group offers free workshops and hosts annual plant giveaways. Twice yearly, the GreenBridge Gardener newsletter provides details on workshops, events, and information about community gardening. Call to join the GreenBridge network.

- **Project Green Reach** ([718.623.7358](tel:718.623.7358) or [718.623.7228](tel:718.623.7228)) is an outreach program for K-8 teachers and classes in Brooklyn’s Title 1 schools that provides curriculum on the topic of your choice. Recent offerings have included Life Cycle of a Bulb and Kitchen Botany. Staff also offers inquiry-based instruction in your classroom, transportation to and a guided tour of BBG, teacher training (five sessions with BBG instructors, three visits to the school), and supplies for a horticultural project. Project Green Reach works with about 40 Title 1 schools a year and two teachers at each school. Teachers
must apply for acceptance into the program, but there is no charge.

• Urban Composting Project (718.623.7290, compost@bbg.org) is funded by the New York Department of Recycling. It provides teacher assistance and resources for starting a composting program, including hosting an on-site workshop at your school.

• BBG is approved by the NYC Department of Education to provide science professional development services to individual schools, regional districts, and parent/teacher associations. It will work with your staff to develop a program tailored to your needs. Contact BBG’s teacher education coordinator, 718.623.7381.

• NYBG also provides a wide array of on-site education programs for K-8 students and their teachers. Topics range from the life cycle of a plant to edible gardens to the role of plants in the water cycle. Go to www.nybg.org/edu to download a catalog of current offerings.

Manhattan and South Bronx

New York Restoration Project (NYRP)
www.nyrp.org

NYRP offers free environmental education programs for students aged 7-16 from public schools and youth development programs in northern Manhattan and the South Bronx. In-school, after-school, and summer programs use NYRP park and garden worksites to teach kids about the many different ecosystems in New York City. Conducted by NYRP educators, who supply all materials and instruction, these interdisciplinary programs reinforce classroom curricula and help students meet city and state Department of Education performance standards in Earth and life sciences, math, and English.

Hands-on outdoor programs include gardening, aquatic science, forest ecology, boatbuilding, rowing, canoeing (with the Bronx River Alliance and Urban Park Rangers), water quality testing, and stewardship activities. Contact Akiima Price, Chief of Education and Programming, 212.333.2552, aprice@nyrp.org

Bronx

The New York Botanical Garden

• Bronx Green-Up (718.817.8026, www.nybg.org/green_up/), the community outreach program of The New York Botanical Garden, provides horticultural advice, technical assistance, and training to community gardeners and school groups in the Bronx. Bronx Green-Up offers free gardening and tree care workshops for adults and classes and certificate programs for community gardeners in the borough.
Queens Botanical Gardens (QBG)
43-50 Main Street, Flushing, NY 11355
718.886.3800, www.queensbotanical.org

QBG offers the NYC Teacher Wormshop: Worm Composting for the Classroom, which qualifies participants for three teacher-training credits. QBG’s Tree Exploration Discovery Kit can be rented for use on class trips through the QBG Tree Trail. The tree kit includes a set of lesson plans with educational activities that introduce your students to trees as living organisms, important parts of our ecosystem, and major contributors to the quality of our daily life. The kit includes apparatus such as binoculars, field guides, clinometers, and stethoscopes as well as Tree Trail guides that take you and your students on a tree-identification journey. Each student also receives a personal toolkit to aid in individual exploration and specimen collection.

Curricular Resources for Teachers

In Print

Plant and Grow—A Guidebook for an Outdoor Children’s Gardening Program for Elementary School Classes

If your schoolyard has a garden, TPI’s “Plant and Grow” is a great resource. Developed by two veteran environmental educators after years of working with children at community gardens, the guide contains complete curricula for a twelve-week spring gardening program and a four-week fall program plus step-by-step guides to nine core gardening activities. The book is geared toward student groups working on an eight-by-four-foot plot. To request a copy contact Maddalena Polletta, maddalena.polletta@tpl.org.

The Tree Book: for Kids and Their Grown-ups

Written and illustrated by Gina Ingoglia.

This beautifully illustrated book introduces children to the wonder of trees and tree ecology, with chapters such as “How Does a Tree Eat and Drink?” and “How Do Leaves Change Color.” It also has an in-depth gallery of 33 trees and their characteristics. Available at BBG’s online store or through Amazon.com.

On the Web

Garden Mosaics
Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University · www.gardenmosaics.org

This fantastic garden education resource offers dozens of illustrated “Science Pages” that can be printed out for kids. Topics include soil testing, mulching, and more. Many are available in Spanish and English; check the Web site for information on obtaining translations into other languages.

The New York Botanical Garden
www.nybg.org/edu/child_edu/seeds.php

Elementary curriculum kits called Garden Adventure SEEDS (Science Exploration and Education Discovery
Series) provide hands-on resources, lessons, assessments, and literacy support in a simple and convenient package. For full kits or just the teacher’s guide: 800.228.0810, www.kendallhunt.com.

California School Garden Network
www.csgn.org/page.php?id=22
The curriculum section includes more than 100 lessons to create, expand, and sustain garden-based learning experiences.

Kids Gardening
National Gardening Association
http://www.kidsgardening.org/growingideas/projects/library.html
Find a rich collection of year-round, garden-based classroom projects, such as exploring soil decomposition, building an herb garden, inviting butterflies into the garden, and more. Materials include detailed instructions on implementation, links to educational standards, and resources.

MillionTreesNYC
Education Programs
Find out how to take advantage of the many tree planting, stewardship, and educational programs that MillionTreesNYC offers. Of special note are Make Every Day an Arbor Day, a downloadable curriculum guide for elementary and junior high school students that includes applied teaching concepts for lessons in math, environmental science, resource conservation and stewardship; Fifteen for Trees: 15-minute downloadable lessons for incorporation into the classrooms; and Talkin’ Trees: a student assembly on tree care and the MTNYC initiative geared to the entire school.

Cumberland County AVA Center
www.cumbravac.org/gardening.htm
This site features a comprehensive list of Web sites for children’s gardening information and resources.

Recycling
EducatingTomorrow.org
646.247.9454, www.educatingtomorrow.org
United Federation of Teachers’ Green Schools Committee designed and supports best management practices for greening the city’s public schools, including establishing recycling programs in each one. This group believes schools must take the lead in reducing our city’s ecological footprint by providing our children—our future leaders—with an environmental education and exemplary environmental programs. The group’s initiatives include Zero Waste, Environmental Curriculum, School Gardening, and Sustainable Energy.

NYCWasteLe$$
This great source of information will tell you how set up a recycling program
in your school, including links to free materials to educate students, teachers, and parents about recycling and waste prevention.

**Additional Resources**

**GreenTeam**
GreenTeam is a horticultural and vocational internship program that has worked with community groups to install vegetable and flower gardens and to provide workshops for seniors and kids. Your group can hire their interns or graduates to install and maintain vegetable and flower gardens and to plant trees. Contact John Cannizzo, JCannizzo@hsny.org.

**Environmental Education Advisory Council of New York City (EEAC)**
www.eeac-nyc.org
EEAC is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to promote and support outstanding environmental education in New York City schools and other learning centers. EEAC is New York City’s only umbrella environmental education organization, bringing together people and resources.

**New York State Department of Environmental Conservation**
www.dec.ny.gov/
Formerly the Division of Lands and Forests, the Department of Environmental Conservation has information for students and teachers on climate change, renewable energy, New York State wildlife, environmental education. It also lists environmental education camps and nature centers across the state.

**Grants and Contests**

*Note: If the deadline for a grant has passed, check online for the following year’s deadline.*

**Kids Gardening**
http://www.kidsgardening.com/grants.asp
This site provides information and application forms for many annual school-garden-related grants, including:
- Hooked on Hydroponics Awards
- Healthy Sprouts Awards
- Youth Garden Grants
- Mantis Awards

The site also contains useful information on fundraising tools, gardening events in the city, and classroom projects.

**National Gardening Association**
http://assoc.garden.org/grants
The association works with sponsoring companies and organizations to provide in-kind grants to projects that actively engage kids in the garden and improve the quality of life in their communities. To be eligible for these awards, your school must plan to garden with at least 15 students aged 3-18.
The Trust for Public Land (TPL)  
212.677.7171, www.tpl.org

If your school had a new garden put in as part of your playground renovation, you are automatically eligible to apply for a Green Spaces grant for TPL materials and environmental education workshops at your school. If you have not applied for the grant, contact TPL for an application. TPL can provide materials for and help lead community planting days, tree-care workshops, compost bin-building, and many other individualized projects. Contact Maddalena Polletta, maddalena.polletta@tpl.org.

Toyota Tapestry Grants  
www.nsta.org/pd/tapestry

Toyota Tapestry offers annual grants to K-12 science teachers for innovative projects that will enhance science education in the school or school district during the school year. The program will award 50 large grants and a minimum of 20 minigrants, totaling $550,000 in all, for projects in the categories of physical science, environmental education, literacy, and science education.

Fiskars Project Orange Thumb  
www2.fiskars.com/Activities/Project-Orange-Thumb/Grant-Program

School gardens and gardening projects geared toward community involvement, neighborhood beautification, sustainable agriculture, and horticultural education are eligible for this annual grant. Twenty-five grants will be distributed, awarding up to $1,000 in Fiskars garden tools and up to $1,000 in gardening-related materials.

Mollie Parnis Dress Up Your School Awards  
www.citizensnyc.org/grants.html

Through the Mollie Parnis Dress Up Your School Awards, the Citizens Committee of New York City offers grants of $500 to $3,000 to support student-led projects that beautify schools or neighborhoods immediately surrounding schools. The award could cover planting from scratch or adding to your garden. Deadlines are September 30 and March 31. Contact Arif Ullah, 212.989.0909, aullah@citizensnyc.org.

Captain Planet Foundation Grants  
captainplanetfdn.org/default.aspx?pid=3&tab=apply

The Captain Planet Foundation funds projects that help students better grasp environmental issues. Projects must enhance understanding of environmental issues, focus on hands-on activities, involve students aged 6-18, promote interaction and cooperation within a group, help young people develop planning and problem-solving skills, include adult supervision, and commit to follow-up communication with the foundation. Grants are $250 to $2,500, and deadlines are March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31. All applicants will be informed of their proposal’s status within four months of the application deadline. It
is very important to remember this information if your project is seasonal.

Grant Wrangler
Funding Directory
www.grantwrangler.com
Grant Wrangler is a free, grants-listing service that makes it easy for teachers to find funding. To see the full list of funding opportunities and to subscribe to the monthly e-newsletter, visit the Web site.

New York City
Environmental Fund
212.483.7667, www.hudsonriver.org/nycef
The fund supports projects that foster restoration of, care for, public enjoyment of, and education about the natural resources of New York City. It funds general environmental programs and encourages community involvement. Awards range from $5,000 to $50,000, with an average award of $15,000.

Golden Apple and Golden Shovel Awards
The New York City Department of Sanitation’s Bureau of Waste Prevention sponsors three contests that award substantial cash prizes to city schools for documenting their school recycling, waste prevention, or beautification projects. The Web site also has other Department of Sanitation education materials on recycling and waste prevention for your school.
Citizens Committee for New York City
212.989.0909, www.citizensnyc.org
Citizens Committee for New York City offers technical assistance and training sessions to help your community group work better. Cash awards of up to $3,000 for local beautification projects are available through the Mollie Parnis Dress Up Your School Awards. The Citizens Committee also provides grants through the Neighborhood Environmental Action Program and the Building Block Awards.

New York Cares
212.228.5000, www.nycares.org
New York Cares facilitates volunteerism in New York City by matching volunteer teams with agencies and groups in need of assistance. Schools needing volunteers to accomplish specific projects should call the office to begin the application and screening process. If your group can supervise projects and teach relevant skills, New York Cares volunteers can do the job. Six to eight weeks’ notice is required.

Funding Resources

North Star Fund
northstarfund.org/grants/
The North Star Fund awards activist-led seed grants of $5,000 to $10,000 to New York City’s most effective emerging organizations. Grants are awarded in the spring and the fall, and award amounts are determined by factors such as the organization’s budget, accomplishments, and need.

Jesse Smith Noyes Foundation
www.noyes.org/apply.html
The Jesse Smith Noyes Foundation supports grassroots organizations committed to promoting a sustainable and just social and natural system. The foundation provides grants for sustainable agriculture projects, fostering an environmentally sustainable New York City, and many other types of projects.

The Norcross Wildlife Foundation
www.norcrossws.org/Foundmain.html
The Norcross Wildlife Foundation supports grassroots organizations committed to promoting a sustainable and just social and natural system. The foundation provides grants for sustainable agriculture projects, fostering an environmentally sustainable New York City, and many other types of projects.

New York Community Trust
nycommunitytrust.org/
The trust makes grants within four major program areas: Children, Youth, and Families; Community Development and the Environment; Education, Arts, and the Humanities; and Health and People with Special Needs. Each program area is further divided into a number of funding categories. On the Web site, click on the Grantmaking link.

Bank of America
www.bankofamerica.com/foundation/index.cfm?template=fd_grantprograms
Bank of America makes grants available through its Local Grant Making Program and the Neighborhood Excellence Initiative. Grants are given to organizations
looking to strengthen their communities, provide leadership training, or recognize a local hero. Application procedures and deadlines vary for each type of grant.

**M&T Bank**
[www.mtb.com/aboutus/community/Pages/CharitableContributions.aspx](http://www.mtb.com/aboutus/community/Pages/CharitableContributions.aspx)
M&T Bank provides charitable contributions to strengthen communities. Support is given to a wide range of services, such as education, civic engagement, and youth organizations. All proposals must be submitted through an M&T Bank sponsor (employee).

**Funding for the Arts**
The New York City and New York State arts councils annually grant money to borough arts councils, which, in turn, regrant the funds to community groups. The grants can be used to support all kinds of arts programs: concerts, theater, dance, storytelling, arts and crafts for kids, public art, murals. Each borough council has a different application and a different deadline. To find out more about the program in your borough, contact:

- Bronx Council on the Arts  
  [www.bronxarts.org, 718.931.950](http://www.bronxarts.org)
- Brooklyn Arts Council  
  [www.brooklynartsCouncil.org, 718.625.0080](http://www.brooklynartsCouncil.org)
- Lower Manhattan Cultural Council  
  [www.lmcc.net, 212.219.9401](http://www.lmcc.net)
- Queens Council on the Arts  
  [www.queenscouncilarts.org, 718.647.3377](http://www.queenscouncilarts.org)

- Council on the Arts and Humanities for Staten Island  
  [www.statenislandarts.org, 718.447.3329](http://www.statenislandarts.org)

**Materials for the Arts**
[www.mfta.org](http://www.mfta.org)
Materials for the Arts gathers materials from companies and individuals who no longer need them and redistributes them to New York City arts and cultural organizations, public schools, and community arts programs.

**New York Waste Match**
[www.wastematch.org](http://www.wastematch.org)
NY Waste Match has a free online Materials Exchange program that links organizations to available and wanted materials.
APPENDIX
Tree Watering/Maintenance Schedule*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Average Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WATERING: Fill tree gator or water tree a minimum of 5 minutes at mulched opening. If temperatures exceed 90˚F add a second day.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1x per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill tree gator or water tree a minimum of 5 minutes at mulched opening. If temperatures exceed 90˚F add a third day per week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2x per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MULCH tree pits</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FERTILIZE trees</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove dead leaves from playground area</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check trees for winter and brace as required</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Once</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This schedule is weather dependent. If there are several days of consistent rain, one day of weekly watering may be omitted.
To remove graffiti on site furnishings such as basketball backboards and posts, benches, bollard barriers, chain link fence, children's tables, entrance arch post, gazebo posts and roof, ornamental fencing, picnic tables, play equipment, trash receptacles:

- First, attempt to remove marks by applying a commercial graffiti remover product to a clean cloth, then rubbing it over graffiti marks.

- If this fails, apply remover product sparingly directly to surface of site furnishing. If you see no damage, you can use a natural fiber scrub brush or Teflon safe pad to gently loosen marks.

- Blot, rinse, or power wash residue. Some areas may need to be re-waxed to renew shine.

To remove graffiti on a chess game table:

- Apply paint reducer to marks with a rag. This method works most effectively within 48 hours of vandalism.

- Use scouring pad to loosen paint. Repeat until marks disappear.

- After the area is dry, apply a sealer if necessary. Paint reducer will not destroy sealer; however, repeated applications of reducer will penetrate the sealer and site furnishing should be resealed. Commercial graffiti remover products will destroy the factory-applied sealer and require you to reseal the product.

- When applying sealer, use a clean sponge. Apply a very light first coat, allowing it to dry for 30 minutes before applying the second coat.

To remove graffiti on playground safety surface:

- Using a minimum four-horsepower pressure washer, clean the surface of the tiles. Using a 400-spray nozzle, clean about half a tile at a time, holding the wand 10-12 inches away from the tile surface. Move the wand back and forth in a linear direction at about five inches per second.

- Use a wet vacuum unit to follow the path of the pressure washer to pick up the dirty water and other loose debris.

- Should this power washing not remove the graffiti from the safety surface, apply acetone (nail polish remover) to a small section with a rag to ensure that no discoloration occurs. If it does not, apply over the graffiti to remove. Rinse thoroughly with water.

- Should none of the above prove successful, individual tiles may have to be replaced. Consult your warranty for specific information on the safety surface specifications and reordering information.

To remove graffiti on all maps and painted images in the playground:

- Using a minimum four-horsepower pressure washer, clean the affected surface entirely.

- Should power washing not remove the graffiti, paint the surface with Benjamin Moore M58 Safety Latex Paint. Apply a minimum of two coats of paint to fully coat over the graffiti, allowing the surface to dry fully between coats.
January
Inspect all ground surfaces and remove debris.................................................................daily
Sweep hard surfaces and remove snow.................................................................as required
Inspect all fasteners on play equipment, site furniture, and basketball goals; tighten or replace as necessary.................................................monthly
Conduct a visual inspection of fencing........................................................................weekly

February
Inspect all ground surfaces and remove debris.................................................................daily
Sweep hard surfaces and remove snow.................................................................as required
Inspect all fasteners on play equipment, site furniture, and basketball goals; tighten or replace as necessary.................................................monthly
Conduct a visual inspection of fencing........................................................................weekly

March
Inspect all ground surfaces and remove debris.................................................................daily
Sweep hard surfaces and remove snow.................................................................as required
Inspect all fasteners on play equipment, site furniture, and basketball goals; tighten or replace as necessary.................................................monthly
Conduct a visual inspection of fencing........................................................................weekly

April
Fertilize and mulch trees..............................................................................................once
Turn on, check, and adjust play spray system and drinking fountain, (weather permitting).............................................................................................once
Inspect and maintain artificial turf.............................................................................as needed
Inspect all ground surfaces and remove debris.................................................................daily
Sweep hard surfaces and remove snow.................................................................as required
Inspect all fasteners on play equipment, site furniture, and basketball goals; tighten or replace as necessary.................................................monthly
Conduct a visual inspection of fencing........................................................................weekly

May
Water each tree a minimum of five minutes at mulched openings.......once weekly (if temperatures exceed 90 degrees F, add a second day)
Check and adjust hoses for watering............................................................................weekly
Inspect and maintain artificial turf.............................................................................as needed
Inspect all ground surfaces and remove debris.................................................................daily
Sweep hard surfaces.................................................................................................as required
Inspect all fasteners on play equipment, site furniture, and basketball goals; tighten or replace as necessary.................................................monthly
Conduct a visual inspection of fencing........................................................................weekly
**June**
Water each tree a minimum of five minutes at mulched openings......twice weekly
(if temperatures exceed 90 degrees F add a third day)
Check and adjust hoses for watering..............................................................weekly
Inspect and maintain artificial turf.............................................................as needed
Inspect all ground surfaces and remove debris.........................................daily
Sweep hard surfaces.....................................................................................as required
Inspect all fasteners on play equipment, site furniture, and basketball goals; tighten or replace as necessary..............................................monthly
Conduct a visual inspection of fencing.........................................................weekly

**July**
Water each tree a minimum of five minutes at mulched openings......twice weekly
(if temperatures exceed 90 degrees F add a third day)
Check and adjust hoses for watering..............................................................weekly
Inspect and maintain artificial turf.............................................................as needed
Inspect all ground surfaces and remove debris.........................................daily
Sweep hard surfaces.....................................................................................as required
Inspect all fasteners on play equipment, site furniture, and basketball goals; tighten or replace as necessary..............................................monthly
Conduct a visual inspection of fencing.........................................................weekly

**August**
Water each tree a minimum of five minutes at mulched openings......twice weekly
(if temperatures exceed 90 degrees F add a third day)
Check and adjust hoses for watering..............................................................weekly
Inspect and maintain artificial turf.............................................................as needed
Inspect all ground surfaces and remove debris.........................................daily
Sweep hard surfaces.....................................................................................as required
Inspect all fasteners on play equipment, site furniture, and basketball goals; tighten or replace as necessary..............................................monthly
Conduct a visual inspection of fencing.........................................................weekly

**September**
Water each tree a minimum of five minutes at mulched openings......twice weekly
(if temperatures exceed 90 degrees F add a third day)
Check and adjust hoses for watering..............................................................weekly
Inspect and maintain artificial turf.............................................................as needed
Inspect all ground surfaces and remove debris.........................................daily
Sweep hard surfaces.....................................................................................as required
Inspect all fasteners on play equipment, site furniture, and basketball goals; tighten or replace as necessary..............................................monthly
Conduct a visual inspection of fencing.........................................................weekly
October
Water each tree a minimum of five minutes at mulched openings..............once weekly
Shut down and drain all water lines for drinking fountain..............................once
Remove dead leaves from playground area......................................................as needed
Inspect and maintain artificial turf.................................................................as needed
Inspect all ground surfaces and remove debris................................................daily
Sweep hard surfaces..........................................................................................as required
Inspect all fasteners on play equipment, site furniture, and basketball goals; tighten or replace as necessary..........................................................monthly
Conduct a visual inspection of fencing...............................................................weekly

November
Mulch tree pits....................................................................................................as required
Check trees for winter and brace.................................................................as required annually
Remove dead leaves from playground area......................................................as needed
Inspect and maintain artificial turf.................................................................as needed
Inspect all ground surfaces and remove debris................................................daily
Sweep hard surfaces and remove snow............................................................as required
Inspect all fasteners on play equipment, site furniture, and basketball goals; tighten or replace as necessary..........................................................monthly
Conduct a visual inspection of fencing...............................................................weekly

December
Inspect all ground surfaces and remove debris..................................................daily
Sweep hard surfaces and remove snow............................................................as required
Inspect all fasteners on play equipment, site furniture, and basketball goals; tighten or replace.........................................................as necessary monthly
Conduct a visual inspection of fencing...............................................................weekly
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hard surface areas</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Surface materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curbs or edges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drainage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety surface area</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Safety tiles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Beveled edges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drainage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Color seal and painted work</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Color finish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Play equipment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Color touch-up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fasteners and fittings tightened</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water fountain</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Water filter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seasonal shut-down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seasonal activation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water hydrant</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seasonal shut-down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seasonal activation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthetic turf</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Debris, stains, and snow removed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trees</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prune, repair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plant protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mulch and fertilize</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disease control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pest control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Playground Weekly Maintenance Report**

| Date: ___________________________ | Weather: ___________________________ |
| Temperature range: ___________________________ | Time: ___________________________ |

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tree maintenance</th>
<th>Hard surface maintenance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>____ Prune</td>
<td>____ Remove debris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ Fertilize/mulch</td>
<td>____ Remove snow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ Water</td>
<td>____ Sweep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plumbing maintenance</th>
<th>Play equipment maintenance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>____ Water filter</td>
<td>____ Inspect all fasteners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ Seasonal shut-down</td>
<td>____ Touch up paint if necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ Seasonal activation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synthetic turf maintenance</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>____ Clean-up</td>
<td>____ Clean-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ Inspect and maintain</td>
<td>____ Sweeping/Trash Removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ Replacement (explain below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ Mulch and fertilize tree pits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ Check and adjust hoses for watering</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ Inspection fence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ Other (explain below)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Remarks

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

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____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
Seed Germination Table

*Use this table to keep track of how long it takes your seeds to grow into transplants. This information will be especially helpful in future years because you will know the best time to start your seeds.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Sowing Date</th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Days to Germinate</th>
<th>Germination Date</th>
<th>Transplant Date to Garden</th>
<th>Days to Maturity from Transplant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
Urban Garden Planting Calendar
NYC Metropolitan Area

This gardening calendar lists planting dates for vegetables and flowers grown in the NYC area. The planting times recommended are the best times to plant to obtain the best results no matter what the garden or growing season is like. The information was obtained over a 15 year period from experiences of gardeners living throughout the five boroughs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MAR</th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUN</th>
<th>JUL</th>
<th>AUG</th>
<th>SEP</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Beans (Bush)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Beans (Pole)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beets</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broccoli</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broccoli Raab</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brussel Sprouts</td>
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<td>Carrots</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cauliflower</td>
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<td>Celery</td>
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<td>Chinese Cabbages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cucumber</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Dill</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dry Beans</td>
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<td>Eggplant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gourds</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kale</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leek (seeds)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lettuce*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melons</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okra</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onion (sets)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Black Eye Peas, Chickpeas, Fava Beans, Kidney Beans, Lima Beans, Pinto Beans, Soybeans

Arugula, Callalu, Chicories, Cilantro, Corn Salad, Cress, Dandelion, Endive, Escarole, Mesclun

*Some varieties of lettuce are described as “heat-tolerant” or “summer lettuces” and can be planted by seed or transplant from mid-April until June 15.

- Sow seeds directly in the garden
- Sow seeds or plant transplants directly in the garden
- Plant transplants directly in the garden
Urban Garden Planting Calendar
NYC Metropolitan Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MAR</th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUN</th>
<th>JUL</th>
<th>AUG</th>
<th>SEP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parsnip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanut</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peas (bush or pole)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peppers (hot or sweet)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigeon Peas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potato (eyes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumpkin</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutabaga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scallion (sets)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shallot (bulbs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash (Summer)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash (Winter)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Spinach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunflower</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet Potato (plants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss Chard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomato</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnip Greens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Flowers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Sow seeds directly in the garden
- Sow seeds or plant transplants directly in the garden
- Plant transplants directly in the garden

Special Consideration Crops
- Asparagus: Best planted as crowns in a perennial garden, mid-April to end of May
- Chives: Best planted as seeds or transplants in a perennial garden, mid-April to end of May
- Garlic: Best planted as cloves in September or October
- Horseradish: Best planted as root cuttings in a perennial garden, mid-April through end of May
- Jerusalem Artichoke: Best planted as tubers, mid-May through early June
- Perennial Herbs: Best planted as transplants in a perennial garden, mid-May through early June
- Rhubarb: Best planted as crowns in a perennial garden, mid-April through end of May
- Strawberry: Best planted as plants in a perennial garden throughout May
# Planting Guide for the New York City Area

## Dates of Importance
**Growing Season:** April 1 - November 30  
Most sand base soils dry out enough to plant April 1 - 15  
Most clay base soils dry out enough to plant May 1

**Frost Dates**  
*Last Frost Date in Spring is May 15*  
**First Frost Date in Fall is approximately October 20**

## Common Vegetables Grouped According to Approximate Planting Times in the NY City Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cold Hardy Plants for Early Spring Planting</th>
<th>Cold-Tender or Heat-Hardy Plants for Late Spring or Early Summer Planting</th>
<th>Hardy Plants for Late Summer or Fall Planting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 1 - 30</td>
<td>May 15 - June 15</td>
<td>July 15 - Aug 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*2-6 WEEKS BEFORE LAST FROST IN SPRING</td>
<td>*0-4 WEEKS AFTER LAST SPRING FROST PLANTED TO GIVE OVER-LAPPING CROPS</td>
<td>**12-14 WEEKS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Peas (S)                                     | Cauliflower (T)                                                          | Beans (S) (Bush)                                |
| Spinach (T,S)                                | Kohlrabi (S)                                                              | Beans (Bush)(S)                                 |
| Leaf Lettuce (T,S)                           | Mustard (S)                                                               | Kohlrabi (S)                                    |
| Broccoli (T)                                 | Chard (S)                                                                 | Turnip Greens (S)                               |
| Cabbage (T)                                  | Chives (S)                                                                | Chinese Cabbage (T,S)                           |
| Collards (T,S)                               | Celantro (S)                                                              | Mustard (S)                                    |
| Kale (S)                                     | Celery (T)                                                                | Cabbage (T)                                    |
| Turnip (S)                                   | Parsley (T,S)                                                             | Collards (T,S)                                  |
| Rutabaga (S)                                 | Beet (S)                                                                  | Leafy Greens (T,S)                              |
| Radish (S)                                   | Carrots (S)                                                               | Cauliflower (T,S)                               |
| Onions (Sets)                                | Parsnip (S)                                                               | Leaf Lettuce (S)                                |
|                                            | Turnip (S)                                                                | Kale (S)                                        |
|                                            | Onion (Sets)                                                              | Spinach (T,S)                                  |
|                                            |                                                                          | Brussel Sprouts (T)                             |
|                                            |                                                                          | Beets (S)                                       |
|                                            |                                                                          | Parsley (T,S)                                   |
|                                            |                                                                          | Carrots (S)                                     |
|                                            |                                                                          | Fennel (S)                                      |
|                                            |                                                                          | Turnips (S)                                     |
|                                            |                                                                          | Dill (S)                                        |
|                                            |                                                                          | Parsley (T)                                     |
|                                            |                                                                          | Radish (S)                                      |
|                                            |                                                                          | Carrots (S)                                     |
|                                            |                                                                          | Green Onions (Sets)                             |

T = transplant  
S = seed

---

*created by John Ameroso  
Cornell University Cooperative Extension rev 1-03*
Using Mulch

General rules of mulching
Choose the right mulch for different planting situations (see the other side). For example, under low evergreens where you don’t grow anything else, stones would be a good permanent mulch. However, they wouldn’t be great in a vegetable garden where you’re tilling the soil every year. Warm-weather crops, such as tomatoes and eggplants, can tolerate plastic, but cool-weather crops, such as broccoli and greens, are better off with straw, shredded leaves, or newspaper. If your soil tends to be wet, organic mulch may retain too much water, which will encourage slugs and snails and may even cause plant stems to rot. And if you have problems with rodents, sharp-edged stones are better to use than organic mulches because animals don’t like digging through them.

Mulch wide and not deep. Too much mulch is not a good thing and can make oxygen unavailable to plant roots, causing plants to decline. Follow the general guidelines on the other side of this tipsheet about how deep to use different kinds of mulch. Avoid creating “mulch volcanoes” around tree trunks and plants, which can rot and kill them. Don’t allow mulch or soil to come in contact with a tree’s trunk; tree bark will rot if buried in any moist material. Never cover the root flare of a tree where woody roots meet the soil surface. Keep mulch six inches away from the trunk of any tree.

To insulate plants in winter, don’t spread mulch around your perennials until they are completely dormant and temperatures have dropped below freezing. Otherwise, winter mulch can smother plants and breed disease.
### Some Common Mulches and Their Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>How Deep</th>
<th>Water retention</th>
<th>Insulates</th>
<th>Weed Control</th>
<th>Decomposes</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaves</td>
<td>3 in.</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Slow; adds nitrogen</td>
<td>Adds, nutrients; chop for better permeability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grass Clippings</td>
<td>1 in. max.</td>
<td>Good if unmatted</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Rapid; green adds nitrogen</td>
<td>Avoid grass treated with pesticides &amp; herbicides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compost</td>
<td>3 in.</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>Adds nutrients; can mix with leaves, other mulch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straw</td>
<td>1-2 in chopped</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fairly slow, robs nitrogen</td>
<td>Highly flammable. Avoid oat straw.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocoa Hulls</td>
<td>1 in.</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Slow, adds nitrogen</td>
<td>May develop mold, smells like chocolate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Bark</td>
<td>2-3 in.</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Replace every 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redwood Bark</td>
<td>2-3 in.</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Very slow, robs nitrogen</td>
<td>Earthworms avoid redwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>2 layers</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Best</td>
<td>Rapid—lasts 1 season</td>
<td>Cover with another mulch to hold in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evergreen Boughs</td>
<td>several layers</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good for wind</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Good for erosion. Remove in spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine needles</td>
<td>1.5 in.</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Good for acid soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawdust</td>
<td>1.5 in.</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Slow, robs nitrogen</td>
<td>High carbon content, low earthworm activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood Shavings</td>
<td>2-3 in.</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Very rapid, robs nitrogen</td>
<td>Hardwoods better than pine or spruce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood Chips</td>
<td>2-4 in.</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fairly slow</td>
<td>Doesn’t rob nitrogen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seaweed</td>
<td>4-6 in.</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Best</td>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Adds nitrogen, potash, sodium, boron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Cover Crops</td>
<td>Full height</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Tilled under</td>
<td>Rich in nitrogen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>2-4 in.</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>Permanent mulch, adds some trace elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Fabric</td>
<td>1 layer</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Slow, lasts several years</td>
<td>Use in permanent beds, cover with top mulch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastic</td>
<td>1-6 mil.</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Best</td>
<td>No decomposition</td>
<td>Adds nothing to soil. Black good for heating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mulch is often sold by the cubic yard. Here’s an easy way to figure out how much to buy:

1. Multiply the length of your garden by the width to find out its size in square feet.
2. Decide how deep you want your mulch to be in inches.
3. Multiply the size of your garden in sq. ft. (1) by the depth of your mulch in inches (2). This is the number of cubic feet of mulch you need.
4. Divide the number you get in (3) by 324.
In this activity, students make a diagram of an area of the schoolyard and then survey each of the trees found in the selected area.

Use the Playground Tree Survey and Playground Tree Map that follow, and the leaf key, Know Your Trees, provided on page 38 of the manual.

Because each schoolyard has different trees and overall form, teachers will have to use their initiative in directing the class members to make the map of the selected tree-survey area in the space on the following pages.

The Know Your Trees page shows some of the trees likely to be planted in your playground and gives both common and scientific names. These may be useful in identifying the trees found in your playground, but there may be other kinds of trees located there, and any means of accurately determining the tree’s type could be used. These means might include reference to a comprehensive tree guidebook or comparison to pictures from school library books.

After the first tree is identified, the class can fill out a tree survey page item all together to learn the process of how this is done and what each term on the survey form means. Then with successive trees, the class may break into smaller groups and survey several different trees more independently, filling out one page per tree and entering a mark and a successive number for each tree on the map page.

This activity emphasizes techniques for estimating and approximating the tree’s height, number of branches, and diameter, rather than focusing on precise answers.
In the area above, make a diagram of the schoolyard, street, or garden area where the survey trees are located. After you fill in the survey page for a tree, put a mark and a number, starting with “1,” on this map showing where each tree is located.
Parts of a Tree

Label the different parts of a tree in the picture above. Use the words from the list below.

Leaves  Branches  Trunk  Bark
Twigs   Buds   Roots  Soil

Name: ___________________________ Date:________________________
Parts of a Flower

- Stamen
- Pistil
- Pollen
- Petals
- Ovary
- Sepals
- Stem
Parts of a Flower
—Details

STAMEN

PISTIL

COROLLA

CALYX
Lady Bug Release/
Praying Mantis Release

Lady bugs and praying mantises are two examples of beneficial insects that we can introduce into our garden area. Beneficial insects serve many purposes. Often they feed on harmful insects that might eat our plant’s roots, leaves or the seeds or seedlings. Beneficial insects are a form of biological control of our plant’s predators.

Both of these easy-to-identify insects are harmless to people and good for our gardens.

Usually they can be aquired by asking at local garden supply outlets for the name of a regional provider.

Lady bugs usually come in a half pint "take-out food" style container, which contains hundreds and hundreds of the little lady bugs. It is best to wet the garden area before releasing them so that they will find water and stay in the garden area. Similarly, they are usually released towards evening, or at least later in the day, so they have less time to stray from the area before coming to rest for the night.

The procedure for the actual release is simply to open the container and gently let them out.

Praying mantises emerge from egg sacks which are made of a cellulose-like material. The mother praying mantis makes these the previous late summer or early fall. They are about an inch across and we take them and hang them with strong thread on a bush or protected branch in the garden. Nature has timed the emergence of the baby praying mantises to come shortly after the emergence of other insects which then serve as their food. This timing is influenced by the weather of the season so we wait and watch our garden over the next weeks for the first small praying mantises to be seen.
Hull St. Community Garden
Summer Children’s Program

Starts July 8th--July 29th

Every Saturday from 12 - 2 pm.

Everyone is Invited!

Parents or Guardians are encouraged to attend with their children.

Summer workshops will include gardening, arts and crafts.

Sponsored by the Trust for Public Land

Made possible by a grant from the Levitt Foundation
JULY
IN THE
NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE
GARDEN AT EAST 151ST ST

NATURE PROJECTS
EVERY MONDAY: JULY 10TH, 17TH, 24TH &
AUGUST 7TH
TIME: 10 A.M. TO NOON
AGES: 9 TO 14 YEARS OLD
ADMISSION FREE, SIMPLE REFRESHMENTS

ARTS’N’CRAFTS
EVERY WEDNESDAY: JULY 5TH, 12TH, 19TH, & 26TH
TIME: 1 P.M. TO 3 P.M.
AGES: 7 TO 14 YEARS OLD
ADMISSION FREE, SIMPLE REFRESHMENTS

PARENT CAN SIGN-UP CHILD FOR ACTIVITIES
ON FRIDAY, JUNE 30TH, AT BAR-B-Q IN
GARDEN STARTING AT 6 P.M.

(MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH GRANTS FROM TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND)
FOR INFO: MARTY ROGERS (718) ***-****