

# Success With School Gardens





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## How to Create a Learning Oasis in the Desert

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with



The Maricopa County Master Gardener  
School Gardening Task Force  
(Gail Morris, Charles Stirrup,  
Raylan Evans and Carolyn Chard)

Illustrations by Erin O'Dell

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Maricopa County Cooperative Extension



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## Preface

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**C**ongratulations! You have just taken an important step toward creating a learning oasis for the special children you know. This book is full of research-based information on successful school gardening, which we have tested in a variety of settings in the low desert. By following the guidelines contained here, you can provide your students with a profound educational experience and enrich their lives immeasurably. Soon you will see your students transformed into scientists, actively participating in research and discovery in the outdoor laboratory you help them to create. Besides providing a motivating, hands-on setting for teaching skills in virtually every basic subject area, the garden is a wonderful place to learn those lessons that cannot be easily taught. Responsibility, patience, pride, self-confidence, curiosity, critical thinking, the art of nurturing and more are all natural consequences of gardening. We applaud your commitment to create this opportunity for your children. We have assembled a tremendous amount of information and resources to support you in your mission.

This book was written and edited by Master Gardeners in Maricopa County, Arizona. These highly trained volunteers have gone through extensive instruction in home horticulture in the low desert provided by the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension. In addition, they are either teachers, parents or volunteers managing school gardening projects.

The Master Gardener program was created to help Cooperative Extension Agents meet the needs for home horticulture information. In exchange for a 16-week course in gardening and landscaping, Master Gardeners donate 50 hours of volunteer time to provide public education in home horticulture. They may field

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questions over the gardening hotline, plan conferences and workshops, or provide a variety of other services, including assistance with school gardens. For more information on the Master Gardener program, contact your County Cooperative Extension Office.

In Maricopa County, we found that we had many more schools interested in having a Master Gardener work with them to create a school gardening program than we had Master Gardeners available, so the idea for this book was born. We designed it to guide the reader through the important decisions in creating and managing a successful school garden. We intend to continually update this book, so we would greatly value your suggestions for improvement or expansion. Please let us hear about your successes and challenges by filling in the form at the back of the book.

Many, many people have put in long and creative hours to bring this product to you. Coordinated by University of Arizona Instructional Specialist Carolyn Chard, the Master Gardener school gardening team included Gail Morris, Raylan Evans, Charles Stirrup and Linda Guy. They created the vision and shaped the framework of the book. Linda Guy, who did much of the research and writing, was tireless in her pursuit of resources and her commitment to meeting the need for this information. Cathy Cromell, who also edited the book, has orchestrated the many components of research, writing, review, publishing and marketing with enthusiasm and grace. Extension Agents Terry Mikel and Kai Umeda, and Research Specialist Roberta Gibson reviewed and offered valuable suggestions for strengthening the book. Many thanks to each of them, and to Arizona Master Gardeners, Inc. and the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension. Without their support, *Success With School Gardens* would not have been possible.

Lucy K. Bradley  
 Urban Horticulture Agent  
 Maricopa County Cooperative Extension





## Introduction

**Y**ou need to know only three things to run a successful school garden: 1) How to cultivate people, 2) How to cultivate plants, and 3) Where to go for help. We have addressed each of these areas in *Success With School Gardens*.

Part 1, “Managing Your School or Youth Garden Program,” walks you through the fundamentals of starting and running a garden. We give you tips on cultivating supportive parents, teachers, administrators and staff. We also provide ideas on developing working partnerships with other organizations and members of your community, recruiting active volunteers, spreading the word about your accomplishments and raising funds. In addition, we provide you with suggestions for nurturing and managing your class.

These chapters are geared to the requirements of launching a full-scale garden on a school campus. However, there is plenty of useful information for any gardening program, regardless of size.

Part 2, “Desert Gardening Basics,” covers everything you need to know to grow vegetables, flowers and herbs in the desert. We discuss selecting a garden site, garden design, soil preparation, plant selection, fertilizing, pest and weed management, effective irrigation techniques, container gardening and much more.

If you are a beginner, all of the information you need to grow plants is here. If you are an experienced gardener, you will find useful information and even a few new ideas to try in your garden.

The extensive Appendices contain many suggestions on where to obtain additional assistance. This section starts with a School Gardening Program Checklist to help you get under way. There are references on school and desert gardening, names and addresses of seed suppliers, sources for educational and technical assistance, and opportunities for grants and other funding. Gardening assis-



tance is provided with planting calendars and a chart to help diagnose problems. Finally, the Glossary will help new gardeners who might be unfamiliar with some of the terms and provides a refresher for the more experienced gardeners.

We are confident that if you follow the guidance presented in this book, you will have a highly successful school gardening program. We wish you the best of luck and look forward to hearing about your accomplishments.

