

Our gardener friends at Longue Vue House and Gardens in New Orleans, have provided instructions for starting your classroom victory garden in your schoolyard.

START YOUR GARDEN

Go on a Site Visit

Take time to visit your garden site at various times of the day and in all types of weather—even pouring rain! Observing your garden space at different times will insure that you choose a location that gets the proper amount of sunshine, shade, and water drainage. Choosing the right location is the first step towards a garden that produces lots of healthy plants and veggies!

Test Your Soil

Some soil can have heavy metals or other contaminants that are not healthy to eat or for growing plants. Visit your local agriculture agent's office for a soil test kit. The cost for processing is around \$10.

The test results will tell you if your soil is healthy and what minerals you can add to make it more nutritious for your plants. Do you see worms in your soil? Worms are a good indicator of healthy, nutrient-rich soil!

Make Your Bed

A good starter bed should be 2' x 5'. Make sure that you will be able to reach the plants in the middle of the bed. Use as much organic material as you can find, like composted plants scraps, dried leaves, and grass clippings, and mix it with the existing soil. If you do not have time to compost in advance, you can always buy organic soils at your local hardware and garden stores.

Plant Your Bounty

Pick out seeds or plants and vegetables that you think look beautiful or taste yummy. Read the back of seed packets and plant tags for all the information you need for planting, such as whether or not the plant will grow in this area and what time of year is best to put the plant in the ground.

Water

Make sure to keep your plants well watered--usually every day. Press your finger into the soil and make sure it feels a bit wet. If your soil is dry, sprinkle water on the dirt around the base of your plants, so they can use their drinking straw-like roots to suck up the water you have sprinkled on the soil.

For a Vegetable Growing guide, soil test kit info, and more local gardening information, go to: www.lsuagcenter.com