

Supporting School Gardens: Maximum Impact, Minimal Input



Naples
Botanical
Garden

GARDENS with LATITUDE®

Britt Patterson-Weber
Youth Programs Manager



CHANGING PERSPECTIVES: PLANTING FOR THE FUTURE

2016 AMERICAN PUBLIC GARDENS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE





The Challenge: “Can you build and maintain a garden at our school?”

Naples Botanical Garden became involved with a neighborhood school garden long before the Botanical Garden physically existed. Word got out.

NBG has grown dramatically in that time – both in programming and acreage. We *can't* build and maintain gardens for schools.

How do we still support school garden efforts in a meaningful way? How do we help school gardens become part of the school culture?



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The Solution: Collier Greens School Garden Network

- Teach-the-teacher model
- Started with a single workshop and a garden manual
- 40 schools and out-of-school programs participated in Collier Greens workshops this year





Collier Greens includes:

- School garden manual written for our area
- 7 Educator workshops during school year
- Regular e-newsletters
- Facebook group
- Shared Google Drive folder of all program resources
- Free plants at workshops
- Food at workshops and opportunities to eat together
- Special field trip opportunities for students



 Naples
Botanical
Garden
GARDENS with LATITUDE®
and
McGraw Foundation
Kennedy Family Foundation
Sidney A. Swensrud Foundation

**Collier
GREENS**
A Resource Manual for Growing
School & Community Gardens



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EarthBox[®] Lending Library – new this year

Schools and out-of-school programs can borrow EarthBoxes for free
Checked out 90 boxes this school year.
Schools can try before they buy – they have the option of buying the boxes from us at cost.

A few schools bought boxes for parents and hosted EarthBox gardening seminars for families.



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Also new this year: Collier Greens Educational Garden Recognition, sponsored by Lipman Family Farms

Intended to incentivize best garden practices – and give us the opportunity to gather data.

Recognized schools received \$500 for their gardens, signage, and a free field trip opportunity.

Awarded 18 schools – together they serve over 6,000 PreK-12th grade students just in their garden programs all across Collier county.



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What hasn't worked

- Trying to obtain discounts for Collier Greens – teachers don't have any money to spend to begin with
- Being rigid with registration & timing
- Long programs (over two hours on a Saturday)
- Asking garden educators to complete any kind of formal survey





What works

- Having lots of contact opportunities and building in informal conversation time
- Inviting *everyone* & being family-friendly
- Keeping the school district in the loop
- Providing access to NBG's Lifelong Learning Programs





- Free plants – very little cost to us, big impact at schools
- Organizing bulk purchases – set schools up for success with quality materials



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- Asking garden educators to participate in carefully selected PR opportunities
- T-shirts (!)
- Operating all of this from my office – rather than driving all over the region to teach at individual schools.
- Empowering schools to determine what sort of garden program works best for them.





Outstanding Outcomes

- Direct impact on families
- Leveraging NBG support to secure other funding
- Cultivation of new relationships





What's next?

- Expansion of EarthBox Lending Library and Recognition Program
- Mini-school garden conference
- Keep the momentum going

