

RHS Campaign for School Gardening



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Profile - NAFSO Conference 2011

OPENING DOORS TO LEARNING: CURRICULUM CHANGE IN THE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

A professional development and training opportunity

Practical ideas for Field Study Centres for growing and creating a garden that can be used as a key resource for learning by visiting schools



Workshop outline: Practical ideas for Field Study Centres for growing and creating a garden that can be used as a key resource for learning by visiting schools



The Royal Horticultural Society is the UK's leading gardening charity. www.rhs.org.uk

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2 – 2.20 Introduction to the RHS Campaign for School Gardening

Why develop a gardening area at your field study centre?

2.20 Ideas for gardening activities in Field Study centres. – Summary of activities for each season. Risk assessment and recommended methods of working.

2.40 Top crops for schools - planning a garden for harvests in term time – group exercise looking at crops and planning what to grow.

2.50 Practical session – a chance to have a go at a range of short gardening activities that can be delivered as part of a field study centre.

4.20 Maintaining your garden area.

The Royal Horticultural Society is Britain's leading Garden Charity. It launched its Campaign for School Gardening in September 2007 with the aims:

'To encourage and support schools to develop and actively use a school garden'.

RHS Campaign for School Gardening is a website based resource where schools can access information to help them develop their school gardens:

www.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening

- Free start-up kit following registration on this website.
- Rewards and certificates for your progress on the new benchmarking scheme.
- Access to useful information and advice that will help you use your school's garden to greater effect.
- Regular news and items of interest sent to you by e-mail.
- Discounted rates on RHS CPD days.
- Free seeds from the Schools Seed Distribution Scheme once a year.
- Access to Regional Advisor

RHS Workshop notes: Practical ideas and inspiration for creating and using gardening at a Field Study Centre Setting

2 – 2.20 Introduction to the RHS Campaign for School Gardening

Why develop a gardening area at your field study centre?

Children take part in a very hands-on memorable learning experience, by get their hands dirty they -

- Learn where their food comes from,



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- Taste and understand the importance of fruit and vegetables for healthy eating
- Understand about seasonality
- Explore the natural world and biodiversity in the garden
- Gain social skills and confidence
- Explore local and global issues.

How can a field study centre impart these benefits of gardening to visiting groups?

Issues - How Field Study centres are different to school settings

Groups may only visit once - for week or just for the day

Groups may plant or sow a crop – but not return see the harvest

Groups may not have garden back at school

Groups are large – how do you garden with large groups of children?

Solutions

1. Develop a Demonstration working garden at Field study Centre –

- Visiting school groups work in field study garden during their visit. Groups take part in seasonal gardening tasks in the garden.
- Good interpretation from FSC of the life cycle of the crops being sown and the seasonal tasks undertaken so schools understand their visit is part of a year long process that continues after they leave the centre but it picked up by another school.
- Grow vegetables and fruit that can be eaten in your FSC – again so visiting groups can see the benefits and realise their work in the garden has contributed to the centre and other visiting schools.

Need to set up a garden – initial expense, design must take into account bringing groups of children into the garden – enough space between beds – seated or open area for group to gather and carry out garden related activities whilst small group is supervised gardening – shed for tools and indoor seed sowing - member of staff needed to plan, coordinate and maintain it.

Key elements to include: soft fruit and vegetable garden, herb garden, orchard, pond and wildlife garden. Compost system and rain water capture. Could also include sensory garden and dry garden.

2. Seed/plant takeaway pack

Visiting Group sows seeds, pricks out seedlings or pot on plants to take away

- Encourages school to grow on crops at school.
- So that the school can compare and continue an interest in the crops they have sown or looked after at the FSC.



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3. Blog/Feedback

The Field study Centre will provide feed back to group through email/blog of the crops the school group sowed/planted or looked after or just a general feedback of what is growing, ready to harvest at the FSC.

4. Day visit workshop

Schools to take part in a workshop that can be completed in a day visit.

The workshop is part of a gardening theme that is integral to the gardening year – so children are aware of that gardening is a constant process that their visit is part of – rather than an activity that is disconnected. Examples included RHS Wisley school visit programmes – Delve with Dr Dirt – all about soils and compost.

5. Pre and post lesson plans

Reinforce the school link by providing lesson plan material to help the schools continue with gardening activities whilst back at school. See RHS website.

2.20pm Running a gardening session in a FSC garden

Risk assessment and recommended methods of working.

Gardening with large groups.... Divide and conquer!

Always start with Health and Safety talk – Tool Crime Scene. RHS Tool Safety doc.

Divide group into manageable size. Group working with tools need a ratio of one adult to 8 children KS2 and above; one adult to 6 children key stage 1. SEN one to 4.

Jobs list on a blackboard – demonstrate simple tasks that can be carried out with little supervision then take small groups at a time to work with tools or seed sow/plant. Try and ensure that everyone gets to sow a seed – if not room in garden then in pots to take back to school.

Digging bed for children to practice using tools all year round.

Plus points – children get the real thing – hands –on gardening! FSC can justify a working garden to produce food for the centre and use as a teaching resource – a ‘win win’ situation

Draw backs – high adult to child ratios – time involved to ensure each adult is confident of task to do.

Logistics of moving small groups around tasks.

Garden may not be big enough to accommodate large group. If too many children could lead to accidents and damage to plants.

May run out of jobs with so many willing helpers – will take careful planning to ensure that you can offer each group that shows interest in the garden sufficient tasks to do.

Solution for low staffing and or small gardening space:



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Need bank of holding activities that mop up large numbers of children in a safe absorbing activities (bug hunts, treasure hunt, collecting leaves) – while small groups work in garden.

2. 30pm RHS gardens School visits programme.

The RHS Gardens run a school visits programme where schools visit for the day to take part in a range of activities that link gardening with the curriculum.

This may give FSCs a more direct comparison to the situation FSCs face – large groups visiting for the day or short period only.

Here are some examples of the RHS Wisley day visit programme all available online at: <http://www.rhs.org.uk/Children/For-schools/School-visits/Wisley/Primary---Teachers-information/Wisley-lesson-plans>

Ready Steady Grow – uses the RHS Wisley demonstration gardens to introduce the group to range of vegetable and fruit plants, herbs and flowers. Explore what parts of the plant we eat? Discover the smell and taste of herbs – which would go into a pizza? Design a fruit salad? Taste test variety of apples? Sow a seed to take away back to school.

Get Growing

KS2 Be a gardeners for the day. What does a gardener do? Take part in a typical and seasonal gardening activity from taking a cutting, sowing seeds, sweeping up leaves.

Delve with Dr Dirt

Understands what soil is and its importance for gardening – covers Science 3 Materials and their properties – Rocks and Soils. Children learn the components of soils and how to identify soil texture. Examine compost and understand the importance of composting to soil.

Dig for Victory Day – covers the history topic of WW2 rationing and Dig for Victory Campaign.

Plus points: Advantage of the RHS school visit system – it allows a large group of children to be immersed in the garden and have a ‘taste’ of a seasonal aspect of gardening. As long as there is one hands on experience – seed sowing, planting a bulb to take home then the visit has a good balance of practical and theory. This may be more achievable than whole groups actually gardening. FSC garden would need less time committed to it but would still need to demonstrate the range of gardening activities.



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2.40pm Top crops for schools - planning a garden for harvests in term time – group exercise looking at crops and planning what to grow.

RHS Campaign for School Gardening has produced a short list of ‘top crops for schools’ those crops that can be sown grown and harvested in school terms, easy to grow and can be used for cooking.

For resources on food growing follow this link:

<http://apps.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/teachershome/resources/planning/onceyouhaveagarden/default.aspx>

Using the catalogues write a list of 5 vegetables that are top crops – and write a calendar for their sowing, planting and harvesting.

3.10pm Seasonal Ideas for Gardening in FSC. Practical session – a chance to look at and have a go at a range of short gardening activities that can be delivered as part of a field study centre school visit.

Make a paper pot and sow winter salad, sweet pea.

http://apps.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/uploads/documents/2010_Making%20newspaper%20plant%20pots_waitrose_1140.doc

Root cuttings of mint

http://apps.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/uploads/documents/Herbs_in_schools_784.pdf

Seed packets

http://apps.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/uploads/documents/2010_template_Going%20on%20a%20seed%20safari_1105.doc

Soil feely test and Make a soil cake

http://apps.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/uploads/documents/2010_intemplate_Soil_texture_with_diagram_1171.pdf

4.20pm Maintaining your garden area.

RHS gardens have garden staff to look after the demonstration gardens – this may be something that you as FSC do not have – so you have to make the garden as low maintenance as possible. Much of the advice given to schools is relevant to you.



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Cover beds with weed suppressant membrane when not in use - this will save you hours of weeding and reduce leaching of nutrients from the soil.

Install a watering system.

Mulch beds well to reduce watering and to reduce weed growth.

If using a raised bed system – reduce the maintenance of paths between beds by removal of grass and replace with gravel or bark and membrane.

