



Creators of America's Largest School  
Garden Program

## **Green Our Planet's Recommended Best Practices for How To Teach in the Garden**

Managing students in an outdoor classroom can seem daunting at first. Some teachers have found the most success by starting off by taking frequent, short trips to the garden at the beginning of the year, then increasing the time spent in the garden throughout the school year. Pretty soon the garden will become a normal area of learning for students.

- Aim to spend at least 1 hour a week in the garden. This will allow for the garden to become a second classroom to students. Also, it is just great for teachers and students alike to get some fresh air!
- Teaching in the garden doesn't mean only teaching STEAM lessons. Teachers in Nevada have taken their students out to the garden for all sorts of lessons including math, reading, writing, and even for morning breakfast time! The opportunities are endless.
- Teachers are not expected to be garden experts! Don't be afraid to learn about the garden alongside your students. It is a great experience for teachers and students to explore and learn together. Teachers can always talk with their Green Our Planet farmer if they are unsure about something!
- Gardens are all about trial and error. If you experience an error in your garden, think of it as a learning experience rather than a mistake!
- Don't be afraid to get your hands dirty! Gardening is a great way for students to explore with a "hands-on" approach.
- Some teachers in Nevada have adopted the "1 finger" garden exploration rule. When students are either exploring in the garden for the first time or if a teacher is afraid of their students damaging things in the garden, make it a rule to only touch things in



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the garden with 1 finger. That way, students will be forced to be gentle with what is growing in the garden.

- Allow students to mingle through the garden during recess or down time. Students who mingle in the garden are learning about the garden without even knowing it!
- Just spending time in the garden can increase anyone's ability to identify what is growing!
- Make sure that your produce is marked with a sign. Simply write the name of the plant on a large tongue depressor and stick it in the soil! This will help students learn to identify what is growing (and teachers too!). Some teachers have even gotten very creative with garden signs, using painted wooden spoons, laminated papers, and even QR codes!
- Talk with your garden team about building an outdoor garden classroom with benches and a whiteboard/chalkboard. Outdoor garden classrooms can be very easy to build and will greatly increase the amount of classes using the garden as a learning space.
- Don't stress over following the Green Our Planet STEAM Curriculum to a T. Go at your own pace, do what works best with your individual class, and have fun with it!
- Encourage your students to take ownership of the garden. After all, it is their garden! Have the students regularly assist with garden maintenance and care, even if it is as simple of pulling a few weeds while walking by. Students who take ownership of their garden will carry their memories of the garden into their adulthood.
- Spread the love for teaching in the garden! If you are a teacher with a lot of experience in teaching outdoors, invite a teacher who is less experienced or more apprehensive to come out to the garden with you.
- Watch for those "teachable moments". They happen a lot in the garden! Maybe a plant isn't growing quite as well as another plant. Ask your students to investigate why this might be!



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- For more tips, please visit [www.greenourplanet.org](http://www.greenourplanet.org) and watch one of our educational videos!