

Wisconsin School Garden Network Brief

Social Distance Learning



In partnership with:

rooted



Wisconsin
Partnership Program
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH



Environmental
Design Lab

Experts believe that interactions among people who are outdoors and at a safe distance are less likely to result in COVID-19 transmission. Outdoor garden-based education affords opportunities to keep students and teachers safe while learning together in-person during the pandemic. And yet, many of the well-established youth gardening activities involve sharing tools or gathering closely to collectively observe, harvest, or taste. This document provides guidance to help you make adjustments to youth garden safety protocol so that students and teachers can gather safely.

SAFETY PROTOCOL DURING THE PANDEMIC

The following guidelines are based on CDC recommendations for outdoor learning (1).

- Take temperatures as people arrive and monitor the symptoms of students. Encourage both educators and students to stay home if they are not feeling well.
- Have hand washing stations and/or hand sanitizer readily available for all participants to use throughout the day.
- Require that staff, volunteers, and students wear masks (making exceptions for individuals with health risks associated with mask wearing).
- Provide clear signage with expectations and regulations. Post signs in highly visible areas.
- Provide activities and learning opportunities that promote social distancing.
- Sanitize all equipment daily or after each use.

MAKING SAFETY EASY IN THE GARDEN

These key guidelines will help you develop activities and curricula that adhere to the CDC safety protocol.

- Have several different activities available simultaneously so that students can work in smaller groups.
- Rather than rotating students through activities within a visit to the garden, assign students a single activity each time they are in the garden with the opportunity to try something new each visit.
- If tools are necessary, assign each tool to a single student for the day or period of time that they are in the garden. Wash the tool before another student or educator uses it(2).
- If possible, host smaller groups in the garden.

ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE SOCIAL DISTANCING

Many youth garden activities can be adapted to provide creative and engaging educational opportunities while keeping students and educators safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. All of the activities suggested below should be done in accordance with the safety protocol described above. For more activities and for additional educational materials that are designed for families, students, and educators to use during the COVID-19 pandemic, visit [wischoolgardens.org/youth-gardening-covid-19](https://www.wischoolgardens.org/youth-gardening-covid-19).

- **Scavenger hunts**
- **Nature walks and garden walks:** Students and educators can remain a safe distance apart while exploring and observing in the garden. Walks can have themes that help students stay engaged and can also be used as a tool for students to observe changes in the garden over time
- **Nature art or drawing**
- **Split activities:** Activities such as harvesting have provided opportunities for many students to participate in a task by letting each student have a turn. Social distancing can make it difficult for multiple students to harvest from a single area, but activities such as harvesting can be split into more than one task so that multiple students can participate. For example, one student can work their way down a row harvesting and leaving the vegetable next to the plant while another student follows at a safe distance and places the vegetable in a crate.
- **Independent reading**
- **Observation:** If space allows, place hula hoops or other circles around the garden 6 feet apart from each other and allow students to observe from within their circles. Students can rearrange and share their observations with a classmate who was sitting in a different area of the garden.
- **Observing an individual plant or area of the garden:** Each student can choose or be assigned a plant to observe, measure, draw, and write about. This can be done over time to observe seasonal change or can be a one-time activity.
- **Sound maps(3):** Students space out throughout the garden, close their eyes, and listen to the sounds around them. Then, students draw a map of their surroundings based on the sounds they hear.
- **Nature journal writing/poetry writing**

The Wisconsin School Garden Network is dedicated to achieving greater inclusion and creating equal opportunity for good quality garden-based education for all Wisconsin children. To learn more about the Wisconsin School Garden Network, visit www.wischoolgardens.org.

(1) Considerations for Community Gardens and Outdoor Learning Gardens: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/outdoor-garden.html>

(2) Food Safety in the Time of COVID-19: Best practices for a community garden: <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/safefood/2020/05/01/food-safety-in-the-time-of-covid-19-best-practices-for-a-community-garden/>

(3) Sharing Nature Worldwide: <https://www.sharingnature.com/sharing-nature.html>