School Grounds Newsletter

February 2011 Ideas and Suggestion for School Gardens

Time to Order Seeds

Spring seed catalogs offer a huge variety of garden plants, and seeds are cheap and easy to order. However, not all plants can be direct sown in the garden. Here are a few tips for which plants to buy from seed, and which to buy from the nursery.

Seeds to Sow Directly in the Garden

- Corn
- Cucumbers
- Zucchinis
- Beans (any kind)
- Radishes
- Carrots
- Peas
- Leaf Lettuce
- Collards

Plant from Starts

- Eggplant
- Tomatoes
- Peppers
- Head lettuce
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower

Other Methods

Potatoes: You'll buy what's called "seed potatoes," which are whole potatoes that you'll cut into chunks, each containing at least one eye.

Garlic: In the fall, you'll break up a head of garlic and plant the cloves.

Onions: You'll order "sets," which are baby onions ready to grow.

Onion sets are very young onions. Sometimes they have a green sprout. Others are dried in a bag, like this variety.

Spring Plant—Fall Harvest

Getting a harvest out of a school garden is a challenge in the northeast since kids are out of school for the height of the growing season. However, plenty of vegetables can be planted in June for harvest in September. Here are a few suggestions:

Potatoes: Chop up well washed or organic potatoes into chunks, each containing an eye. Plant 4-6 inches below the soil in June. Harvest the potatoes after the vine has died in the fall.

Gourds: Who can resist a bottle gourd that gets dried into a natural shaker?

Pumpkins: Don't try this unless your soil is super-rich with composted manure. Pumpkins are heavy feeders and will produce no female flowers without rich soil.

Popcorn: A late season Indian corn or popcorn is ready to harvest in the fall.

Onions: Most take 110 days to mature. Start these from "sets" and plant them well enough apart so they can grow to the size of baseballs.

Carrots: Plant a long-season carrot for fall harvest. Thin these ruthlessly and weed early. Carrots like a clean bed.

Melons: Cantaloupe are surprisingly successful in the garden. Choose a long season variety, and give them a little trellis to keep the fruit from rotting in the mud.

Territorial Seed Catalog

Order a seed catalog by visiting www.territorialseed.com. This outfit offers planting advice right on the page with the seed descriptions. Plus, their variety is outstanding. My personal fave this year is a pickling cucumber called Bushy. It bears small cukes in 45-50 days and grows on compact manageable 5-foot long vines. Perfect for a June harvest in a school garden.

By Amy Jolin, City Green Education Director