

Flora & Fauna

Starting a School Garden

A school garden can provide a wonderful “living classroom” or “outdoor laboratory” for children to learn and explore their natural world. In addition to learning about the natural sciences, children can also use a garden to learn about math (how many plants can fit in this space?), foreign languages (what are the Latin names for common plants?), and important life skills (how to grow healthy food and eat well).

If your child’s school doesn’t already have a school garden, consider making the case to school administrators to have one put in. Here are some steps to help guide you through the process.

Step 1: Recruit a committee. Your school garden should be a collaborative effort. No one person can be expected to get everything up and running. Contact local landscapers, contractors, and members of gardening clubs for help and support. It is especially important to contact teachers. If the most important contributors are involved from the beginning, they are more likely to follow the project with more interest. They may also be eager to take responsibility and actively contribute to the garden.

Step 2: Make a plan. Create a proposal that outlines the details of the school garden. Include ideas for how the garden will work in concert with the core curriculum and be of use to teachers. Come up with a design idea that includes a location, construction timeline, and a 6-12 month stewardship and maintenance plan. Be sure to include a budget and fundraising plan, too.

Step 3: Pitch your idea. Set up a meeting with your school’s principal to present your plan. While he or she may not be able to sign off on the idea, he or she can give you guidance and suggestions for moving forward and presenting your idea to the school board or superintendent for final approval.

Step 4: Secure start-up funding. Work with the parent-teacher association at your school to come up with fundraising ideas. You can also approach local businesses for in-kind support such as tools, seeds, soil, or plants. Large home improvement stores such as Lowe’s and Home Depot also offer small grants.

Step 5: Break ground! Once you have approval and support for a long-term garden plot for your school, break ground and get things planted. Your garden committee should meet on a regular basis to evaluate how things are growing, and to determine if any changes need to be made for the next growing season.

For additional resources, visit schoolgardenwizard.com. You can download handy guides and helpful resources to get your school garden started.

Note: If you don’t have children but love to garden and share your plant knowledge, contact your local school to see if you can volunteer your time!

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Cleaning Corner: Quick Cleanup Fixes!

Little messes are a daily occurrence in any household. Here are a few quick tricks you can use to tidy up those messes fast.

- **To protect grout from mold and mildew,** take an ordinary white candle and rub it along the grout lines. The wax will prevent mold and mildew from growing.
- **To freshen the toilet bowl,** drop in an Alka-Seltzer tablet. The fizzy action will give it a quick clean, and it won’t harm the porcelain.
- **To clean your iron,** lay out a piece of aluminum foil and iron it. The icky buildup will stick to the foil.
- **To tackle spilled food in the oven,** pour table salt over it right away. The salt will form a crust that makes the food easy to wipe up. It also reduces the burning smell.

March

- 239 BC The first recorded perihelion passage of Halley's Comet
- 1790 The first United States census is authorized
- 1803 Ohio is admitted as the 17th U.S. state
- 1842 Anesthesia is used for the first time in an operation by Dr. Crawford Long. As an interesting footnote to the operation, Long's fee for the anesthesia and surgery was just two dollars!
- 1872 Yellowstone National Park is established as the world's first national park
- 1974 Watergate scandal: Seven presidential aides are indicted for their role in the Watergate break-in and charged with conspiracy to obstruct justice
- 1980 Voyager 1 probe confirms the existence of Janus, one of Saturn's moons

Health Information: Reduce Your Risk of Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, a general term for memory loss and other intellectual abilities serious enough to interfere with daily life. Symptoms usually develop slowly and get worse over time. Unfortunately, Alzheimer's has no cure; however, there are treatments for symptoms that can slow the progression of the disease. For more in-depth information on Alzheimer's, visit www.alz.org.

Here are a few preventive steps for lowering your risk:

- **Be aware of symptoms.** You can help protect yourself and your loved ones by detecting problems early. It may be possible to slow the progression of the disease with medication and therapy. So be aware of the top ten warning signs:
 1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life.
 2. Challenges in planning or solving problems.
 3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work, or at leisure.
 4. Confusion with time or place.
 5. Trouble understanding visual images and special relationships.
 6. New problems with words in speaking or writing.
 7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps.
 8. Decreases or poor judgment.
 9. Withdrawal from work or social activities.
 10. Changes in mood and personality.
- **Participate in mentally challenging activities** such as doing crossword puzzles, learning a new language, or playing a musical instrument.
- **Develop a strong social network.** A number of studies indicate that maintaining strong social connections and keeping mentally active as we age might lower the risk of cognitive decline and Alzheimer's.
- **Keep your heart healthy.** The risk of developing Alzheimer's or vascular dementia appears to increase as a result of many conditions that damage the heart or blood vessels. These include high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and high cholesterol. Protect your heart-head connection by engaging in regular physical activity, eating a balanced diet, and staying at an appropriate weight.
- **Switch to a Mediterranean diet.** A Mediterranean diet includes relatively little red meat and emphasizes whole grains, fruits and vegetables, fish and shellfish, and nuts, olive oil, and other healthy fats.

Kid Corner: Indoor Fun for Cold and Rainy Days

March isn't a month that is well known for good weather. In fact, the old saying for the month is "If March comes in like a lion, it will go out like a lamb." For those "lion days" when the weather is too cold, too windy, or too rainy, turn to this list of activities to help keep your kids active and engaged.

1. **Make a weather chart.** Talk to your kids about that old March saying and put together an experiment to see if it's really true. Have your kids write down the weather each day – is it rainy? Cloudy? Sunny? Windy? What's the temperature outside? At the end of the month, compare the first and last few days to see if March really did come in like a lion and go out like a lamb.
2. **Design your own stationery.** Construction paper, plain white paper, and blank note cards can be transformed with markers, crayons, stickers, glue, glitter, and stamps into personalized stationery for writing letters to friends or thank you notes.
3. **Invent a secret code.** Have your kids create their own code (for example, 1=a, 2=b, etc.) and send secret messages to each other.
4. **Have a treasure hunt.** Create a treasure hunt for your kids. Hide clues around the house, each one leading to another (For example: "It's underneath the place where we eat as a family." Answer: The dinner table!), until finally they find the treasure chest, which can be a simple box you fill with new toys, puzzles, costumes for dress up, etc.
5. **Visit the library.** There are a million worlds to explore inside the books in the library. Take your kids to your local library and show them how to check out a book. Then sit together and read as a family. Be sure to share and ask questions about the story each person is reading. Not only is it fun to share, but it helps improve reading comprehension.
6. **Write a story.** Encourage your children to create their own stories and adventures. They can write their stories down in a simple notebook and share them with the family. For a creative twist (or for children who can't quite read or write yet) tell a story using pictures. Invite your children to cut pictures out of a magazine and glue them to paper. Then let them tell the story to the family.
7. **Cook up a new recipe.** Let your children create their own unique recipe. Pick up some simple ingredients such as bread, tortillas, peanut butter, fruit, pretzel sticks, raisins, etc. Invite your children to come up with their own unique sandwich or wrap. Or, let them use the food to create a picture or cool design on their plate. Art never tasted so good!

Just about every household has leftovers on spaghetti night. But instead of just reheating noodles for lunch or dinner the next day, transform them into a delicious breakfast dish. Serve with a side of fruit or a glass of orange juice for a complete and nutritious breakfast.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup leftover spaghetti from last night's dinner
- 6 eggs
- 1/4 cup milk
- Salt
- Pepper

Directions:

1. Whisk together the eggs, milk, spaghetti, salt and pepper.
2. Pour into a skillet and cook over medium heat for 6-8 minutes, or until eggs are set.
3. Optional: Garnish your with a few quartered cherry tomatoes, parsley, and a sprinkling of parmesan cheese.

S&P Time Saver

Most recipes call for a pinch of salt and pepper to add flavor. To save time while cooking, fill a small container with 2 parts salt (a coarse salt such as kosher or sea salt) to 1 part black pepper.

This will make it easy to add a generous pinch of salt and pepper to your dishes and get a perfectly seasoned meal every time.

For a fun variation, customize your spice container by adding more pepper, crushed red pepper, or other favorite spices.

Dump the Distractions while Driving

It only takes a moment of distraction for an accident to happen, and unfortunately, more and more drivers are distracted by their cell phones these days. Here are some sobering statistics:

- Distraction from cell phone use while driving (hand held or hands free) extends a driver's reaction as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of **.08 percent**. (University of Utah)
- The **number one** source of driver inattention is the use of a wireless device. (Virginia Tech/NHTSA)
- Drivers that use cell phones are **four times** as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves (NHTSA, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety)
- **10 percent** of drivers aged 16-24 years old are on their phone at any one time. (Nationwide Insurance)
- Driving while distracted is a factor in **24 percent** of police-reported crashes. (Nationwide Insurance)
- Driving while using a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by **37 percent** (Carnegie Mellon)

It's clear that using a cell phone when you drive – either to talk to text – is a very risky habit. It takes your eyes and your mind off the road and puts you, your passengers, and other travelers at risk. The problem has become so bad that many states have enacted legislation that prohibits the use of cell phones while driving and charges heavy fines for those who violate the law.

Here are a few tips to follow to make sure you can be a better driver and stay safer on the road:

- Put your cell phone on silent before starting the car. Or make a rule that you will not answer the phone while driving.
- Pull over to a safe location and park your vehicle if you need to talk or text.
- Tell clients and business partners that their calls may not be returned immediately if you are driving.
- If you're the parent of a teen, remind your child that cell phone use is especially dangerous for beginning drivers. Consider making a rule – for the entire family – that prohibits cell phone use while driving.

Carpet Talk: Removing Pet Urine

Part of being a pet owner is dealing with occasional accidents. Sometimes Fido can't wait till you get home from work, or Fluffy gets upset after a trip to the vet. Pet urine can be tricky to remove, especially if it's been left untreated for a long time. However, with a few simple tricks and some fast response, you can successfully preserve your carpet.

Step 1: If the area is still damp, start by blotting with a plain white towel.

Step 2: Next, mix a cleaning solution of a half-teaspoon of liquid detergent (no bleach) and one cup of warm water. Apply the solution to the area, blot with a white towel, then rinse with warm water.

Step 3: Keep repeating step 2 until the discoloration is removed.

Step 4: Mix one cup white vinegar with two cups water. Apply and blot up with a towel. Rinse with water.

Step 5: Get the carpet as dry as possible. Blot as much moisture up with towels as you can and turn a fan on over the spot to get it dry.

These steps work well on fresh urine stains. However, if the stain has been there for a long time (or if it is a spot that has been repeatedly marked), the urine may have saturated down through the carpet and padding. If this is the case, it's time to call in the experts. Your carpet care professional has an arsenal of specialized products to tackle your worst pet odor problems. So don't hesitate to call!



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