

Josephine Sparks
josephine_sparks
jgymnastsparky@gmail.com
Bloomington High School South

The garden I am working with is the Child's Elementary School garden. I made my teaching tool for their garden because I have volunteered in the Garden club they have every tuesday and the kids are closely involved with the garden. The teacher was very open to

regenerative organic practices and said she would love to put my sign in their garden to teach her students about photosynthesis and the importance of soil. I talked to her about techniques that they could implement that I found as suggestions from

(<http://www.regenerateland.com/a-brief-introduction-to-most-important-techniques-in-regenerative-agriculture/>).

1. Holistic Decision Making-Economics, Equity, Environment

- Their garden is not for a profit, but solely for educational purposes, so they do not deal with an economic standpoint.
- *Permaculture Design*: Their rain garden is situated in front of the garden beds to soak up the major waterflow into Jackson Creek at the foot of the property. They place plants that need more water than others at the base of the hill where the water pools.

2. Soil Food Web

- The school cafeteria sends all food waste to Mrs. Smith, whose parent volunteers take care of compost management until it is ready to be put in the garden.
- The *compost system* looked complicated to me, but she explained it as Instant pots in the ground. It has a simple "doggy door" for worms, where, once the bins are in the ground, a hole lines up the two bins and worms can travel through to eat organic material. They can close these doors with sliding blue pieces that shut the worms in one bin to make it faster.



3. Properly Managed Livestock

- When I asked if it would be feasible for a school garden to have managing livestock, she surprised me with a yes. She said there has been some discussion of a chicken coop on wheels, inspiration from the *Edible School Yard in Berkeley California* which she visited for inspiration. (<https://www.edibleschoolyard.org/>)
- Could eggs laid be sold or eaten? She said that the kids eat the tomatoes straight off the vine but meat or dairy might need a more strict protocol. She was open to sending in an inquiry on the subject.

4. Perennial Crops

- All of the herbs are perennials, as well as most of the native plants.
- She said the main problem is that a lot of the things they want kids to help grow and get to go through the whole process with are plants like tomatoes that are not perennial.
- They plant trees in the butterfly gardens, and after discussion shade and sun hours, they are thinking about planting persimmon trees on the north side of the garden, so as the sun rises and sets all parts of the garden get both shade and sun.

5. Polyculture

- *Companion Planting*- She said they may not participate in full polyculture, but they try to pair plants next to each other that expel nutrients the other plant needs in a system called Companion Planting. They do not plant where there might be competing nutrients.
- They rotate where each plant goes every year, except for the perennials that come up in the same spot every year.

6. S.T.U.N. Breeding- "Sheer Total Utter Neglect"

- While they do not alter their seeds in any way to achieve this, they do not use ANY chemicals-*no fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides*.

7. Water Use and Management

- They collect water in rain barrels and do not use a hose at all.
- When our region had severe flooding this summer, (our lake rose 11 feet over normal) they put out hay bales on the top of the hill to absorb the water as it came down the hill and slowly leak it into the root systems of the garden's plants.
- The hay bales not only monitored the water to the plants, but also controlled erosion of the mulch and soil in the garden.



Because she was already implementing a lot of organic practices, I signed up the Child's Elementary School Garden on the Climate Victory Garden Page. She was ecstatic that someone my age cares enough to do the research and had the kids show me everything about the garden.