



WHAT'S THE BEST GARDEN FOR YOU?

City Blossoms has been co-designing and building kid and youth driven outdoor classrooms for over 10 years with students, parents, educators and neighbors. These gardens aim to create safe green spaces with various educational and social opportunities. When a school or potential partner invites City Blossoms to their space for the first time we ask several questions to help the team begin to define what kind of gardening project or program is affordable, sustainable and the best fit possible for the community of people to be engaged.

A City Blossoms Garden Defined

We believe gardens can come in all sizes and shapes and can be designed to fit most budgets. That said, after years of co-designing children and youth-powered green spaces there are a few must-haves to create a truly sustainable space. Therefore, we strongly encourage that all new projects include: 1) at least four beds or containers for growing a diverse collection of plants, 2) enough room for a group of children or youth to be either in or near the garden, 3) features and materials for nature play and exploration, 4) room for art and signage, 5) easy access to water and storage and finally, 6) ongoing people power. Whether you are planting in a group of large containers on asphalt or building a native in-ground garden these elements will strengthen the sustainability of your project.



20 Discussion Questions to Consider:

Defining your *People Power*:

- How would you describe your school/organization and its culture?
- What are you looking for from your garden? How will it fit into the school/organization's culture?
- What will be the primary and secondary purposes of this garden and who will use the space? (If a school, consider in and out of school time)
- Who will be responsible and care for the space and logistics? A team of 2-5 adults is best.
- What are some resources that your school has access to?
- What are some areas that may cause challenges or where you will need support?
- Are there other partners (organizations like City Blossoms, individuals, volunteer groups) who you can invite to help build and activate the garden?



Taking your future green space from *Vision to Reality*:

- Do you have a site in mind for the garden? Why there? Is it visible and/or close to the entrance of the school/building? a water source? the playground or other communal meeting areas?
- What kind of garden makes sense? What are the parameters your team has to work within? How does that align with the garden you hope to have?
- How will the garden support or add to the local ecosystem? like insects?
- How will the garden be designed? Whose input is needed?
- If your idea is really big how could it be broken into phases/seasons? This gives you the opportunity to refine your vision as it takes shape and fundraise as needed along the way.
- What is the cost associated with the design? Is the plan financially appropriate and sustainable over multiple years? How and by who will funds be managed?
- Can this garden be built and maintained primarily with community power? Involving community members, participants and volunteers in the garden build ensures buy-in and sustainability.



Making Your Garden a *Community Hub*:

- What are ways your school community, culture and diversity can be reflected in your garden?
- What will programming look like? Does any of it include open play and exploration time?
- How can people have visual and/or physical access to the garden during non-programming hours? Is there a plan for inviting, inspiring and informative signs?
- If food or seedlings are grown how will they be shared?
- Can the garden host or participate in any celebrations, activities led by others, an outdoor lunch option or any other gatherings?



Finally in the end, how will you define success in your first year? What about the following years?