

Classroom Gardens – Growing Systems

In order to participate in the Classroom Gardens Program you need to choose a growing system to use. This is a summary of the three systems we offer for use as part of the program. Note that no matter which system you choose we will need artificial lights to successfully grow vegetables. No matter which system you choose ONFE staff will be there to support you in making sure you feel comfortable using the system!

Tower Garden

This is a hydroponic vertical tower that we used exclusively in the first year of the program. It is widely used in schools. As part of the program, a school could get two of these towers, or one Tower Garden with one Garden Tower.

Features

- 28 growing spots per tower, making two towers sufficient for most schools.
- Can be built with students in about 1.5 hours.
- Plants are grown in rock wool cubes.
- Comes with seeds and exact instructions to follow.
- On casters – so it can easily be moved.

Advantages

- Easy to learn how to use and maintain. You do not need a green thumb!
- Looks nice and easy to keep clean
- Sounds of trickling water for 15 minutes every hour
- Easy to harvest and plant

Disadvantages

- Uses strong chemicals that students can't touch
- Electricity for water pump (and lights)
- Plants quickly die if the power is cut
- Not organic, though nutrients are natural (mined).
- You may have to haul some water about once a week





Garden Tower

The garden tower is a vertical growing system with soil and an integrated vermicompost. As part of the program a school could have just one Garden Tower or combine it with a Tower Garden.

Features

- 50+ growing spots per tower, so one tower is sufficient for your school.
- Can be built with students in about 1 hour.
- Plants are grown in soil.
- Central tube is designed to be a home for worms that then help you compost food scraps, providing nutrients to the growing plants!
- On casters – so it can easily be moved.

Advantages

- Fully organic growing system
- Beautiful showcase of the entire plant life cycle from seed to harvest to decay and nutrient generation
- A nice natural feature
- No pumps – system is resilient to power cuts
- Easy to harvest and plant
- Students get to touch soil and grow just like in a garden.

Disadvantages

- With soil it will create some dirt
- Requires a bit of comfort with gardening and looking after a vermicompost – but it is not hard to learn
- Requires about 4' x 4' of space (but you only need one per school)
- Students can get dirty
- Less water hauling than Tower Garden, but you'll have to regularly add food scraps
- May have a slight smell at times (damp earth), though it should NOT stink.
- Fairly heavy so moving it to a location it can't be rolled to is harder.

