

Bay View School Garden

Brooklyn, N.Y.

For many urban schools, starting a school garden starts with a fundamental challenge: Where to grow?



Space often is an issue. That is, none exists or it's covered with asphalt. Schools with open ground may have contaminated soil, which makes digging and growing food a bad idea.

Bay View School (PS 102) in Brooklyn, N.Y., didn't let limited space stop its desire for a thriving edible garden program. It decided to grow vertically.

Called Nature's Classroom @ PS 102, the garden grows in a hanging pocket system on two chain-link fences surrounding the school courtyard, said parent coordinator

Margaret Sheri. The system is designed by Woolley School Garden Program.

"It's the easiest method we've tried so far – no weeds, easy watering, no bending," said Sheri.

Students grow zebra and cherry tomatoes, green beans, lettuce, squash, baby greens, mizuna, eggplant, sugar snap peas, cucumbers, broccoli, bok choy, arugula, marigolds and herbs, including basil, mint and cilantro.

These veggies are used in the school's Garden to Cafe Program, a New York City school food initiative, for Friday salads and fall and spring harvest festivals.

Students have learned a lot, too. They now can identify vegetables and their nutritional value and know they taste delicious. They've learned what plants need to grow and that you can grow vegetables in a city -- even on a fence. Students also have learned how herbs enhance the flavors of food.

Children love spending time in the garden, explained Sheri. They feel "they are in a special, magical place that does not look like the rest of Brooklyn."

This break in the day lets them experience nature up close through activities like watering, touching soil and finding worms. "They are always full of questions and good suggestions."

More information:

PS 102 Bay View School

http://www.ps102.org/site_res_view_folder.aspx?id=b35001c2-42b7-4afe-b300-f536545856ed

Woolley School Garden Program

<http://www.woollyschoolgarden.org/ps102bayview.html>
<http://www.woollyschoolgarden.org/>

