

**How do we care for our pumpkins during the summer when school is not in session?**

## **PROJECT PUMPKIN (gr 3-5)**

### **Summer Pumpkin Daycare**

#### **Overview**

This curriculum explores the relationship between people and the food they eat. By growing pumpkins in a garden plot, the curriculum takes teachers and students through six features of sustainable agriculture that separate it from conventional farming. If the entire curriculum is completed, students will gain an understanding of sustainability and people's place in the food chain.

Sustainable Agriculture, for the purpose of this curriculum, shall be defined as "a system of food production, supported by consumers, where farming operations, practices and technologies work in harmony with the natural systems that sustain life on earth."

#### **Suggested Grade Level**

This curriculum is designed for 3rd through 5th grade levels. The topics covered can be built upon in complexity throughout that age range.

#### **Approximate Time**

Each family will need to commit to coming for about 2, 60 minute sessions during a specific summer week.

#### **Objectives**

1. The students will maintain their garden over the summer so that the plants are still alive in the fall.

#### **Activity Abstract**

This activity sets up a summer garden care schedule, then gives the students and their families instructions as to how to care for the garden over the summer.

#### **Materials**

- garden care forms (see Appendix A)
- shoe-box sized plastic bin (waterproof)
- pencils
- notebook
- garden care tools, such as gloves, a weed remover tool, a trowel, and a watering can and/or hose
- water hook-up (spigot)
- rain gauge for garden

**Procedure (Session 1)**

1. **Tap prior knowledge.** Ask class to think about the care they're giving their pumpkins. Who will do that over the summer?
2. Explain to the class that they will have to help with these tasks, even though they will not be in school. They will take home a sign-up sheet to choose one week when they will help in the garden.
3. Send home the sheet and wait for responses. Call families who don't respond to get answers!
4. Create a master schedule of which families will care for the garden each week.

**Teacher note:  
Sample forms  
to send home  
are in  
Appendix A!**

**Set-up**

Inside the waterproof box, put the notebook, pencils, a copy of the master schedule and garden care instructions. Place the garden tools near by. Put them in a protected, safe place in the garden. Plant the rain gauge in the garden in a sunny area (not under any plants).

**Procedure (Session 2)**

1. Pass out the master schedule to the students, along with a garden care instruction sheet (Appendix B) that has their daycare dates on it.
2. **Hands-on experience.** Take the class out to the garden. Walk through a summer care session as you would if you were coming with your family, so the students know what to do. Answer any questions.
3. During the summer, call or email to remind families when it is their week. Visit the garden periodically to make sure nothing is amiss and help families take care of problems that arise.

**Teacher note:  
Invite parents to  
walk through the  
summer care  
procedure with the  
class! You can hold it  
in the evening or after  
school if that works  
best for parents.**

Appendix A: Sample garden care forms.

This year, your \_\_\_\_\_ grade child participated in a Sustainable Agriculture program where their class planted pumpkins to be harvested this Fall. Next school year, the children will harvest their produce and sell it.

Between now and mid-August the garden will need care. Some weeding and much watering will be necessary. Please fill out the form below to select a week when you and your child are available to tend their garden. Plan to commit to tending twice during your week - either a Tues. or Wed. and Fri. or Sat.

DETAILS ABOUT CARE REQUIREMENTS WILL BE GIVEN OUT WITH YOUR WEEK ASSIGNMENT. If you have any questions please contact:

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# Garden Volunteer care sign-up

RETURN TO CLASS BY \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE PICK THREE WEEKS THAT ARE BEST FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILD TO TEND THE GARDEN THIS SUMMER, IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE 1,2,3. ONLY ONE WEEK WILL BE ASSIGNED.

WEEK OF:

June 9 \_\_\_\_\_

June 16 \_\_\_\_\_

June 23 \_\_\_\_\_

June 30 \_\_\_\_\_

July 7 \_\_\_\_\_

July 14 \_\_\_\_\_

July 21 \_\_\_\_\_

July 28 \_\_\_\_\_

Aug. 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Aug. 11 \_\_\_\_\_

# SUMMER GARDEN CARE INSTRUCTIONS

FAMILY NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SUMMER CARE WEEK \_\_\_\_\_

1. Review the Garden Journal to determine the extent of care during the last visit.
2. Check the rain gauge. Record any precipitation in the Journal.
3. Feel the soil and look at the plants. Do they need water? Are they happy?
4. Water the plants during your week, so they receive an inch total of water. An inch of water is equivalent to applying water so that if it could be contained at the garden perimeter it and wasn't absorbed it would fill the area one inch deep with water.
5. Remove weeds around plants and in the paths. Place the weeds in the weed pile for composting at a later date.
6. Watch out for any bugs that are eating the plants. If you find any, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ as soon as possible!
7. Thin plants as necessary. Notes on thinning will be provided in the Journal by \_\_\_\_\_.
8. HAVE FUN!!! WRITE A STORY, POEM OR DRAW A PICTURE IN THE GARDEN JOURNAL.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL:

\_\_\_\_\_