

## WISCONSIN YOUTH GARDEN SELF-ASSESSMENT

This assessment is designed to help your program consider best practices for gardens programs at early care and education sites. The term **garden** can be broadly defined. A garden can grow inside or outside. It can be planted in the ground or in containers like window boxes or pots. A garden can include a grove of fruit trees or vines growing on fences or arbors. After completing this assessment, you will be able to see your program's strengths and areas for improvement. The answer choices in box furthest to the right represent best practice recommendations. Compare your results to the best practice recommendations to see your strengths and areas in which your program can improve.

**GARDEN PROGRAM:** Describe your program's garden.

<input type="checkbox"/> There is no garden in use.	<input type="checkbox"/> There is a non-edible garden in use.	<input type="checkbox"/> There is an edible garden that is not in use	<input type="checkbox"/> There is an edible garden used by the children of the program infrequently	<input type="checkbox"/> There is an edible garden used by the children of the program frequently.
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### **GARDEN DESIGN**

**1. Our program's garden is accessible \* to all children, staff, and families who want to use it.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Little	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> To a great extent
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\*Accessible means children can reach and use materials, furnishing, equipment, and so forth. This does not mean that every child has to have access at all times. For materials to be considered "accessible," they must be within view of children or if it is observed that children can freely access and use the materials. Children must be able to reach and use the materials for a period of 1 hour a day in a program of 8 hours or more. This time can be provided at one time or as a combination of several periods throughout the day. (Reference: [Environment Rating Scales](#))

**2. The area in or around our program's garden has walkways of appropriate width,\* material, and placement that allow students, staff, and families to move easily from one garden area to another.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Little	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> To a great extent
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\*A walkway of 36-48 inches allows enough room for two individuals to walk side-by-side regardless of mobility abilities.

3. Our program's garden has adequate\* and inviting multi-generational seating that is multi-purpose and promotes reflection, observation, and conversation.

<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Little	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> To a great extent
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\* Adequate seating means there is enough seating (e.g. benches, stumps, picnic tables, open grass, etc.) for a class of six to twelve garden visitors to all be seated in or near the garden.

4. Our program's garden uses plants, natural materials, pots and planters, trellises, and other garden decor of varying textures, colors, sounds, scents, and tastes to engage children's senses.

<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Little	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> To a great extent
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5. Our program's garden uses birdbaths, [pollinator-friendly plants](#), and other items to attract and maintain pollinators.

<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Little	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> To a great extent
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6. Our program's garden is designed to provide learning opportunities in planting, caring for, and harvesting produce.

<input type="checkbox"/> Never or rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 time per month	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 -3 times per month	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 time per week or more
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### **GARDEN-BASED NUTRITION EDUCATION PRACTICES**

1. Teachers incorporate garden-based nutrition education\* into their classroom routines.

<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 time per month	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 -3 times per month	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 time per week or more
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\*Garden-based nutrition education can include the incorporation of garden activities at circle time lessons, story time, stations during center time, cooking activities, and lessons in the garden.

**2. Our program's collection includes posters, books, and other learning materials\* that promote healthy eating through gardening.**

<input type="checkbox"/> No materials	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 4 materials	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 – 10 materials	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 10 materials
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\*Learning materials that promote healthy eating through gardening includes books about planting, growing, or harvesting gardens, pictures of fruits and vegetables grown in the region, and garden areas.

**GARDEN PRODUCE**

**1. Our program's garden incorporates edible plants.**

<input type="checkbox"/> No edible plants	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 3 types	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 – 6 types	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 7 types
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**2. Our program's garden produces fruits and vegetable for children to taste as snacks or meals.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Never or rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 time per growing season	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 -3 times per growing season	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 time per week or more during the growing season
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**GARDEN SAFETY PLAN**

**1. Our program has a written garden safety plan\* that includes the following topics:**

- Garden design (e.g. shade, spacing, avoiding sharp edges and protrusions, pathways)
- Garden planting and maintenance (e.g. soil, water, weed control, pest control, tools)
- Harvesting garden produce (e.g. hand washing, clean tools, food grade containers)
- Storing garden produce (e.g. proper temperature, storage containers)
- Preparing garden produce (e.g. hand washing, produce rising, avoiding cross-contamination)

<input type="checkbox"/> No written garden safety plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Topics referred to generally, but not explicitly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 2 topics included in garden safety plan	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 – 5 topics included in garden safety plan
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\* A garden safety plan includes any written guidelines about safety requirements for your program's gardens. A garden safety plan can be included in parent handbooks, staff manuals, or other documents.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **1. Teachers and staff receive professional development\* on gardens or garden-based education.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Once at time of hire	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 -3 times per growing season	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 time or more per year
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\*Professional development can include taking in-person or online training for contact hours or continuing education credits. It can also include information presented at staff meetings.

## **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

### **1. Families are included in garden planning and design.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Not all	<input type="checkbox"/> Very little	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> To a great extent
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### **2. Families are included in garden events\*.**

<input type="checkbox"/> No garden events occur	<input type="checkbox"/> Garden events occur without families	<input type="checkbox"/> Garden events occur with families once per year	<input type="checkbox"/> Garden events occur with families more than once a year
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\*Garden events can include planting or harvest celebrations, cooking class, and garden clean-up.

### **3. Families receive information and updates\* on garden and garden-based education.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Once per year	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 – 6 times per year	<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly
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\*Information and updates can be offered through in-person sessions, print materials such as brochures or program newsletter, website, bulletin boards, photos, emails, and text messages.

### **4. Families' culture and traditions are reflected in the garden design, plant selection and events.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Very little	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> To a great extent
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## **WRITTEN POLICY**

### **1. Our written policy\* includes the following topics:**

- Garden design
- Garden-based nutrition education practices
- Garden produce
- Garden safety plan
- Professional development on gardens and garden-based nutrition education
- Education and engagement for families on gardens and garden-based nutrition education

<input type="checkbox"/> No written policy or policy does not include these topics	<input type="checkbox"/> Topics referred to generally, but not explicitly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 2 topics included in policy	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 or more topics included in Our policy
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\*A written policy includes any written guidelines about your program's operations or expectations for teachers, staff, children, or families. Policies can be included in parent handbooks, staff manuals, and other documents.

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**Developed by Community Groundworks and the Wisconsin Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Initiative. 2016.**

## **References:**

Environment Rating Scales: <http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/>

Food Safety Guide for School Gardens: Cooperative Extension [http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/foodsafety\\_schoolgardens.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/foodsafety_schoolgardens.pdf)

Go NAP SACC Self-Assessment Instrument: <https://gonapsacc.org/>

Child Care Licensing Rules and Regulations: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cclicensing/rules>

Pollinator-Friendly Plants, Xerces Society: [http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/MidwestPlantList\\_web.pdf](http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/MidwestPlantList_web.pdf)

Public Playground Safety Handbook: <http://www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/122149/325.pdf>

Wisconsin School Garden Network, Childcare to Table: <http://bit.ly/ChildcaretoTableFinal>

Wisconsin School Garden Network, <http://www.communitygroundworks.org/content/school-garden-briefs>