

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board Policy

BP 3285
Business and Noninstructional Operations

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Vegetation Policy

This policy is approved by the Board of Education in support of the Oakland Unified School District's Wellness Policy. This policy addresses the operational relationship between school sites and the Department of Buildings & Grounds ("B&G"). Buildings & Grounds recognizes the importance of outdoor classroom gardens within school sites for nutritional and educational purposes. In order to assist with school gardens while maintaining the sites, Buildings & Grounds has set up specific protocols that outline guidelines and requirements for outdoor classroom gardens on OUSD Grounds and those areas where B&G can assist with gardens.

Communication

- All sites should have a designated school Garden Liaison by the start of the school year. Two liaisons may be chosen to overlap on availability for year-round coverage. Liaisons can be a school staff member, parent volunteer, etc. Sites must contact B&G with their Garden Liaison's contact information by the first month of the school year.
- If the designated Liaison is no longer at the site, a replacement Liaison must be established by the school site administrator. Sites must inform B&G of any changes.
- B&G's Garden Coordinator and the School Site Garden Liaison will meet as needed for programmatic and school site issues, questions, and concerns.
- The B&G Garden Coordinator can be reached at (510) 879-2644. B&G will respond within one week.
- The Buildings & Grounds Garden Coordinator will attend OUSD Garden Council meetings on a monthly basis.
- If B&G has concerns regarding a school garden, the B&G Garden Coordinator will contact the Site Garden Liaison and the Site Administrator. If B&G is not able to establish communication with a site's Garden Liaison or a resolution cannot be reached, B&G will contact the OUSD Garden Council prior to taking any action on a school garden.

Supplies and Needs

Buildings & Grounds may sometimes be able to assist school gardens with either material or staffing. For requests, place work orders with B&G. Fulfillment and timeliness of work orders depends on material availability and priority amongst other projects.

- **B&G will provide assistance with these materials if they are in stock and with these projects if staffing allows:**
 - Cut lumber to size
 - Transfer soil and compost between vendors and sites
 - Run water lines; install new hose bibs in gardens, if a water line exists; if new construction (moving in new portables) is taking place and a hose bib can easily be added with the construction project
 - Fix stripped hose bibs
 - Supply leftover fencing materials

- **B&G will not:**
 - Assemble garden boxes on site
 - Install fences and gates around gardens. B&G will refurbish and deliver picnic tables that are in stock, if time permits. Please contact B&G's Garden Coordinator for availability and location.
 - Provide string for weed whackers
 - Lend rototillers.
 - Move shipping containers between sites
 - Purchase supplies or materials for garden program including soil, compost, lumber, new fencing materials, new picnic tables, tool sheds, shipping containers or weed whackers. However, if any are available and not needed, B&G can donate to gardening projects. Please contact B&G's Garden Coordinator for availability and location.

- If necessary, B&G can provide district vehicles for delivery (B&G driver). Please contact B&G's Garden Coordinator for availability and location.

Outdoor Classroom Garden Areas

All new outdoor classroom sites and/or expansions to already existing sites must be approved by Buildings & Grounds and Site Administrator before any building takes place.

- **Building Materials:** Garden beds and boundaries cannot be made from railroad ties, treated lumber or old tires because they contain toxic chemicals that can leach into the soil. Redwood, cedar or plastic wood (i.e., Trex) should be used.
- Once an area is established as a Garden area, the area becomes the responsibility of the designated site Garden Liaisons and not OUSD's. Site Garden Liaisons must maintain and care for gardens. This includes keeping weeds under control either by weed whacking or sheet mulching.
- Gardens need to be maintained year-round on a monthly basis. All gardens will need additional maintenance prior to school breaks, holidays and end of school year. Gardens that are not maintained are subject to removal by B&G. B&G will contact the School Garden Council prior to taking any action on a school garden.
- If a site Garden Liaison, Site Administrator or B&G Staff has concerns about maintenance of a school garden, they should bring these concerns to the OUSD Garden Council to elicit resources, support and possible solutions.
- Buildings & Grounds will inform the site Garden Liaison and the Site Administrator when a garden site is not being maintained. If a site is having a continuous problem, Buildings & Grounds will meet with the Site Administrator and the Site Garden Liaison to discuss the concerns and agree on a plan to solve the problem. Site Personnel will be given an agreed upon, reasonable period of time to rectify the problem before any steps are taken by B&G to remove plants or containers, to redefine the garden area or to remove the garden.

- Disassembling gardens created by School Sites: If a school site wants to disassemble a garden that they created, it is their responsibility. Please communicate this information back to B&G so B&G can take over that site.
- Whenever necessary, B&G can provide site maps to Garden Liaison.

Summer Maintenance

Schools are responsible for creating a summer plan for their garden (irrigation, harvest, weeding). If no one can maintain the garden over the summer, it should not be planted before summer vacation. Before summer break, all composting systems onsite must be harvested, secured to limit access, and free of food scraps or other material that may attract rodents.

Outdoor Classroom Infrastructure

- **Tool Sheds/Greenhouses**

Any tool shed or greenhouse regardless of its size must be pre-approved by B&G. The location and the type of storage unit must also be cleared with Buildings & Grounds before the item is purchased. Tool sheds and greenhouses should not be placed on school lawns or next to a building or any area that will give someone access to the roof or school site. Sites must ensure that sheds are not used as climbing structures. B&G recommends Tuff Sheds. Any tool shed or greenhouse that is over 250 square feet needs to be pre-approved by the Director of B&G and then go through the official approval process by the Department of State Architecture.

- **Fruit Trees**

B&G understands that fruit trees can be an important part of the school nutrition program and wishes to continue support for fruit trees. However, this support must be under the following guidelines.

When a site wants to plant fruit trees, it needs to be cleared with B&G's Gardening Manager. The Manager will come to your site to meet with the Site Garden Liaison to approve type and location.

Trees cannot be planted on water lines, sewers, electrical lines or in fire paths.

- B&G prefers that fruit trees be planted within garden areas. B&G recommends dwarf and semi-dwarf fruit trees if fruit trees are planted.
- Trees must be planted 25 feet from any building, 15 feet from all fence lines and with 12 feet between trees in areas through which a mower needs to go. If trees are planted less than 12 feet apart, in the event that B&G needs to reclaim a garden area, the fruit trees will most likely need to be pulled out in order for mowers to get through.
- Dwarf and semi dwarf fruit trees can be considered for planting closer to buildings and fences. Obtain prior approval from B&G.
- The Site Garden Liaison is responsible for keeping fallen fruit off the ground. If fallen fruit becomes a problem, it may be reason for the fruit trees to be removed. B&G will contact the School Garden Council prior to taking any action on a school garden if B&G is not able to establish communication with a site's Garden Liaison.

Cactus plants/Ivy

For safety reasons, cactus plants and ivy are not permitted.

For safety reasons, plants with spines are not permitted in school gardens. (The spines pose a risk to students. There are cactus without spines and citrus trees and other bushes with spines.)

No invasive plant species (ivy, running varieties of bamboo, etc.)

Consult the following lists for invasive plants:

www.cal-ipc.org/ip/inventory/weedlist.php

www.cdfa.ca.gov/phpps/ipc/encycloweedia/encycloweedia_hp.htm

- **Drip irrigation**
 - Temporary water-conserving irrigation systems such as drip irrigation should be designed and maintained to decrease opportunities for vandalism and by covering drip lines and emitters with mulch or other ground covers. The system should also be monitored on a regular basis to check for leaks, prevent overspray and to ensure emitters are in working order.
 - Permanent irrigation Systems: All permanent systems must be pre-approved by B&G prior to installation and purchase of materials. This system should only be installed by qualified irrigation personnel.
 - B&G will provide a copy of the OUSD irrigation standards for permanent systems.

- **Water Lines**
 - All water lines should be 18 inches below ground.
 - When digging near a waterline, do not dig deeper than 12 inches
 - Plant only plants and vegetables that have shallow root systems near water lines.

- **Signage**

Signs should be posted on stakes or fencing. Signs should not be drilled into walls

Tool Closets

School sites implementing a garden will provide a secure space on the school grounds to store tools and materials. The storage area should not be a mechanical room. Sites must ensure that equipment and electrical panels are not obstructed. ALL water heaters, sprinkler clocks and booster pumps must be easily accessible with clear view. Keep all tool closets organized and clean. Store all tools in a safe manner.

Outdoor Sinks

Sinks can be installed in garden areas. The water source will come from a hose to the sink. Hoses cannot run over pathways or other walkways for safety reasons. All sinks need a drainage system such as a bucket.

Painting a Mural within a Garden

All murals first need to be cleared with the Site Administrator and B&G. Mural maintenance is the responsibility of the school site.

Garden Beds on Blacktops

Garden beds can be built on blacktops so long as the asphalt is NOT broken up and they are not blocking driveways or other safety routes for students and / or fire trucks. The exact location needs to be cleared with B&G's Garden Coordinator and the School Site Administrator before being built. Depending on the location there can be issues with drainage, soil, fire hazards and more. Line beds so that asphalt cannot leach up into the vegetable beds.

Solar Fountains

Solar fountains can be installed in garden areas as long as they do not compromise the underground irrigation.

Fencing

Any fencing needs to be approved by B&G.

Accessibility Requirements for Students of Differing Abilities

There are accessibility requirements for outdoor spaces at school sites. Create paths of travel that are at least the width of a doorway (3 feet) with wider areas for turn around (5 feet). Wheelchairs need to have direct access into garden areas. Beds should be high enough for students of differing abilities to access. Woodchips are fine. B&G will not purchase handicap accessible woodchips for play structure areas.

Cloth for weed control

Mesh cloth is fine. Plastic weed control is not acceptable.

Sheet Mulching

Organic materials such as cardboard can be used as a weed barrier to sheet mulch as long as the cardboard is covered by 4-6 inches of compost and/or mulch to keep the cardboard in place and to prevent a potential fire hazard. Exposed cardboard creates an extreme fire hazard.

School sites may accept donations of locally chipped tree prunings or wood chips from tree trimmers or other approved vendors indicated on the OUSD School Garden Council's vendor list. Wood chip donations may not be accepted from unapproved sources as the material may contain invasive plants, disease or pests.

NOTE: The City of Oakland has adopted a city-wide model ordinance for Bay-Friendly Landscaping that includes using sheet mulching (with cardboard or other natural material) as a standard practice for all new city building and public works projects. The ordinance can be found at <http://www.stopwaste.org/home/index.asp?page=951>

Piles / Deliveries

Clear all deliveries including amount and location with the school administration. All soil, compost and wood chips piles need to be at least 10 feet from buildings.

Other Protocols

- **Spraying at Sites**

The Site Garden Liaison must provide updated site maps to Buildings & Grounds so that garden areas do not get sprayed. It will be the responsibility of the Site Garden Liaison to update the maps as needed. B&G does not spray in designated garden areas. However, if a garden area is not being maintained or there is an excessive problem with weeds or rodents, B&G will contact site or OUSD Garden Council Coordinator. B&G will not spray gardens unless prior communication is established with the Site Garden Liaison or Garden Council.

- **Feral animal removal**

B&G contacts vendor to set traps for animal removal. Sites should contact B&G to request removal.