



OCOTILLO MIDDLE SCHOOL

School Garden Program Guide 2026

1. VISION & GOALS

Vision: The Ocotillo Elementary School Garden Program seeks to establish a well-integrated school garden that is sustained over time, connects the entire school community to nature and foodways, and aligns with our school's mission to prepare students for healthier, happier futures through meaningful education.

Goals:

- ✿ Support Arizona Science Standards through experiential learning.
- ✿ Increase student access to fresh produce and nutrition education.
- ✿ Build community through shared garden events and volunteer opportunities.
- ✿ Foster environmental stewardship and responsibility.

2. GARDEN LEADERSHIP (ROLE)

Garden Committee Chair: Angelica Lopez, *PE Teacher* (Garden Club Leader)

Committee Members:

- † Jasmine Chen, *4th Grade Teacher* (Garden Curriculum, Back-Up Chair)
- † George Rose, *Facilities Manager* (Garden Construction & Maintenance)
- † Janice Bilberry, *Parent Volunteer* (Events & Volunteers)
- † Ivy Amaryllis, *AmeriCorps Volunteer* (Planting & Growing)

Consultants:

- † Janice Fortune, *Master Gardener* (Technical Assistance)

Succession Planning

- † Annual Handoff: Occurs each May during staff transition meeting
- † Training: Outgoing chair trains incoming chair for 2 weeks
- † Documentation Storage: Google Drive > Ocotillo/Garden
- † In the case of an unplanned transition, a new chair can access the Google drive documentation and meet with one or more committee members.

3. GARDEN DESIGN & LAYOUT

Type(s) of Garden:

- ✿ Details captured in the DIG in Schools Tool ratings in Google Drive
- ✿ Outdoors - 6 raised beds (4'x8', 2 ADA-accessible) with drip irrigation & automatic timer, 2-bin composting, shade structure seats 30 students
- ✿ Indoors – all 2nd grade classrooms have a small hydroponics set-up

Outdoor Garden map in Google Drive: [Ocotillo/GardenDesign.pdf](#)

4. GARDEN GROWTH & MAINTENANCE

Active months (when school is in session):

- ✿ One-Time Tasks (annual or in 2026 Action Plan - see [Google Drive](#)): winterize before break (facilities management), create new signage (classes), add small pollinator station (Garden Club)
- ✿ Weekly/Monthly Tasks: Maintain tools & storage area (facilities management & classes), check water system (facilities management), check for pests (facilities management & classes), test & manage soil (classes, Garden Club), plant (classes, Garden Club), weed & manage growth (classes, Garden Club), harvest (classes, Garden Club), carry & turn compost (Nutrition Services, Garden Club)

Dormant months (summer break):

- ✿ AmeriCorps & parent volunteers visit once/month for compost management and soil preparation prior to school year starting
- ✿ Perform broad pest management for school grounds, coordinated through facilities management to include & protect garden grounds

5. BUDGET & FUNDING

Annual Budget: \$1,350

- ✗ Soil - \$0 (donation)
- ✗ Gloves - \$50
- ✗ Irrigation replacement parts - \$100
- ✗ 2 New hydroponic stations - \$200
- ✗ Signage materials - \$200
- ✗ Seeds & trellises - \$100
- ✗ Student curricular materials - \$300
- ✗ Pollinator station construction materials - \$200
- ✗ Miscellaneous - \$200

Current Funding/In Kind Sources: Carryover (\$600), student farmers market sales (est. \$50), harvest festival tax donation drive (est. \$500), local Home Depot for soil donation

Potential Funding/In Kind Sources: Whole Kids Foundation Grant, ADE School Garden Grant, local nursery for seeds & starter plants

6. INTENDED USE(S)

Lessons:

- 📖 Classroom science (2nd grade – introduction to ecosystems)

- 📖 Junior Master Gardener Level One – Learn, Grow, Eat & Go! (grades 3-5)
- 📖 Meets AZ Science Standards: 2.L2U1.8; 3.L2U1.9; 4.L4U1.11; L1U1.5

Other Student Engagement :

- 📖 After school garden club
- 📖 Encourage students to spend free time outdoors
- 📖 Schoolwide taste testing, take-home produce, & sensory development (herbs & vegetables)
- 📖 Creative lessons (ex., social studies & health education)

Community Engagement :

- 🌸 Fall Harvest Festival
- 🌸 Student-led farmers market (Fridays in October)
- 🌸 Spring Planting Festival

