

# Georgia

## SCHOOL GARDEN CALENDAR

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This calendar is designed to assist school gardeners in achieving success in their garden. Each month is divided into gardening activities, administrative actions, and classroom connections.



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## GARDENING ACTIVITIES:

- Harvest remaining summer crops and prepare beds for planting cool-season crops for the fall garden.
- Terminate cover crops in beds you want to use for fall vegetables. Either leave chopped cover crops on top of the soil as a mulch or incorporate them into the soil. If you choose to work the terminated cover crops into the soil, let the plant matter decompose for a few weeks before planting seeds. Smaller pieces decompose faster.
- Submit a soil test. You can use the soil report for math lessons to calculate how much soil amendment and fertilizer should be added before planting the fall garden.
- Install transplants of vegetable crops with a longer maturing time, such as Brussels sprouts, rutabagas, and winter squash.
- Water after installing transplants and continue watering as needed to prevent drought stress.
- Refer to the vegetable planting chart from University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Circular 963, "[Vegetable Gardening in Georgia](#)," for recommended planting dates.

*The included spring and fall planting dates refer to the time those crops are typically planted in middle Georgia, which includes the areas of the state that stretch from Columbus through Macon to Augusta. In extreme south Georgia, spring planting dates can be as much as two weeks earlier than those in middle Georgia, while fall planting dates can be as much as two weeks later. In north Georgia, spring planting dates can range anywhere from one to three weeks later as you progress northward through the mountain counties, while fall planting dates can be about two weeks earlier. Use the [UGA Weather Network](#)'s soil temperature information as a guide.*

## ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

- Consult UGA Extension Circular 1101, "[Steps in Starting a School Garden](#)," if the garden is new.
- Connect with your [local UGA Extension office](#) to see which horticulture, food safety, or food nutrition workshops are scheduled for the school year.
- Include the garden in school open house tours.
- Have a booth or table with information about the garden at the school open house to recruit volunteers.
- Schedule the first meeting for the school garden committee. The responsibilities of the team should include fundraising, community outreach, event planning, garden classroom scheduling, and volunteer management. Plan the schedule for future meetings and ways to communicate with the group.
- Develop this year's school garden calendar with chore assignments for volunteers.
- Start a record-keeping system. This can be a simple notebook to record plant data and garden notes.
- Take pictures of the garden and promote it on social media.

## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:

- **Classify and count objects:** Sort a variety of seed shapes and sizes and count the number in each category.
- **Living and nonliving:** Tour the garden and classify garden elements as living or nonliving.
- **Weather:** Observe and measure the weather conditions in the gardens. Discuss how weather impacts the garden.
- **Patterns of the sun:** Observe the movement of the sun throughout the day. Mark shadows in the garden, and calculate how many hours of sun the garden receives during the school day.
- **Pollination:** Collect and graph data about pollinators in the garden.
- **Biographical history:** Learn about George Washington Carver's influence on agriculture and his work with sweet potatoes. Harvest sweet potatoes and use some of his sweet potato recipes.
- **Poetry:** Write garden haiku!
- **Lesson plans:** Find garden-based learning lesson plans at the UGA Extension [School Garden Resources website](#).





# September

## GARDENING ACTIVITIES:

- Continue sowing seeds and transplanting fall crops, such as beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, collards, kale, lettuce, mustard greens, onions, radishes, spinach, and turnips.
- Annual herbs that are well suited for growing in cool weather include cilantro, chives, dill, and parsley. Once established, perennial herbs like catmint, Georgia savory, lavender, rosemary, sage, and thyme will also tolerate cool weather.
- Refresh mulch to suppress weeds and retain soil moisture around transplants.
- Maintain constant moisture when germinating seeds. Spread a thin layer of mulch over the seeds to retain moisture and to keep out weeds. After sowing and adding mulch, wet the seedbed to moisten the seeds and settle the soil.
- Water the garden as needed to prevent drought stress. Pay special attention to new transplants.
- Start adding leaves and other materials to the compost pile.



## ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

- Check in with teachers to make sure they are scheduled to use the garden during the school year.
- Ensure that new teachers are comfortable in the garden.
- Consider a presentation about the garden at a parent teacher association/organization (PTA/PTO) meeting.



## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:

- **October is Farm to School Month** and there will be plenty of resources available to school gardens this month.
- **Plant needs:** Research plant needs, and take a trip to the garden to identify how garden caretakers are meeting plant needs in the garden. Write a how-to, make a video, create a poster, or compose a skit describing what elements plants need to live. Allow students to cultivate and water plants.
- **Physical science:** Prepare two recipes using a garden vegetable demonstrating physical or chemical changes. For example, kale salad vs. kale chips.
- **Informational reading:** There are many wonderful children's books about gardens and gardening. Read garden-related books discussing key details and gardening activities within the stories. Compare story gardens to the school garden.





# October



## GARDENING ACTIVITIES:

- Harvest cool-season crops.
- Later in the month, plant garlic and short-day onions. These will grow over the winter and be ready to harvest in the late spring and early summer. Contact your Extension office for recommended planting times and varieties that will do well in your area.
- Watch for migrating monarch butterflies. Make sure that the garden has flowers to provide food for the migrating butterflies.

## ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

- Now is a great time to take photos of the students in the garden. These photos will be important for grant applications.
- Make sure that the garden is part of the school's fall festival. Consider having a scarecrow contest or pumpkin carving contest in the garden.

## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:

- **Parts of the plant:** Sketch plants in the garden and label plant parts.
- **Measurements and data:** Count and graph vegetables harvested or complete a taste test with garden vegetables and graph the class favorites.
- **Microorganisms:** Research the role microorganisms play in composting, nitrogen fixation, or insect control. For example, *Bacillus thuringiensis* (*Bt*) is commonly used in the garden as a beneficial organism. Apply gained knowledge by maintaining the compost pile, planting nitrogen-fixing crops (like beans or peas), or using *Bt* to control garden pests.
- **Descriptive writing:** Use all of the senses to describe the school garden.





# November

## GARDENING ACTIVITIES:

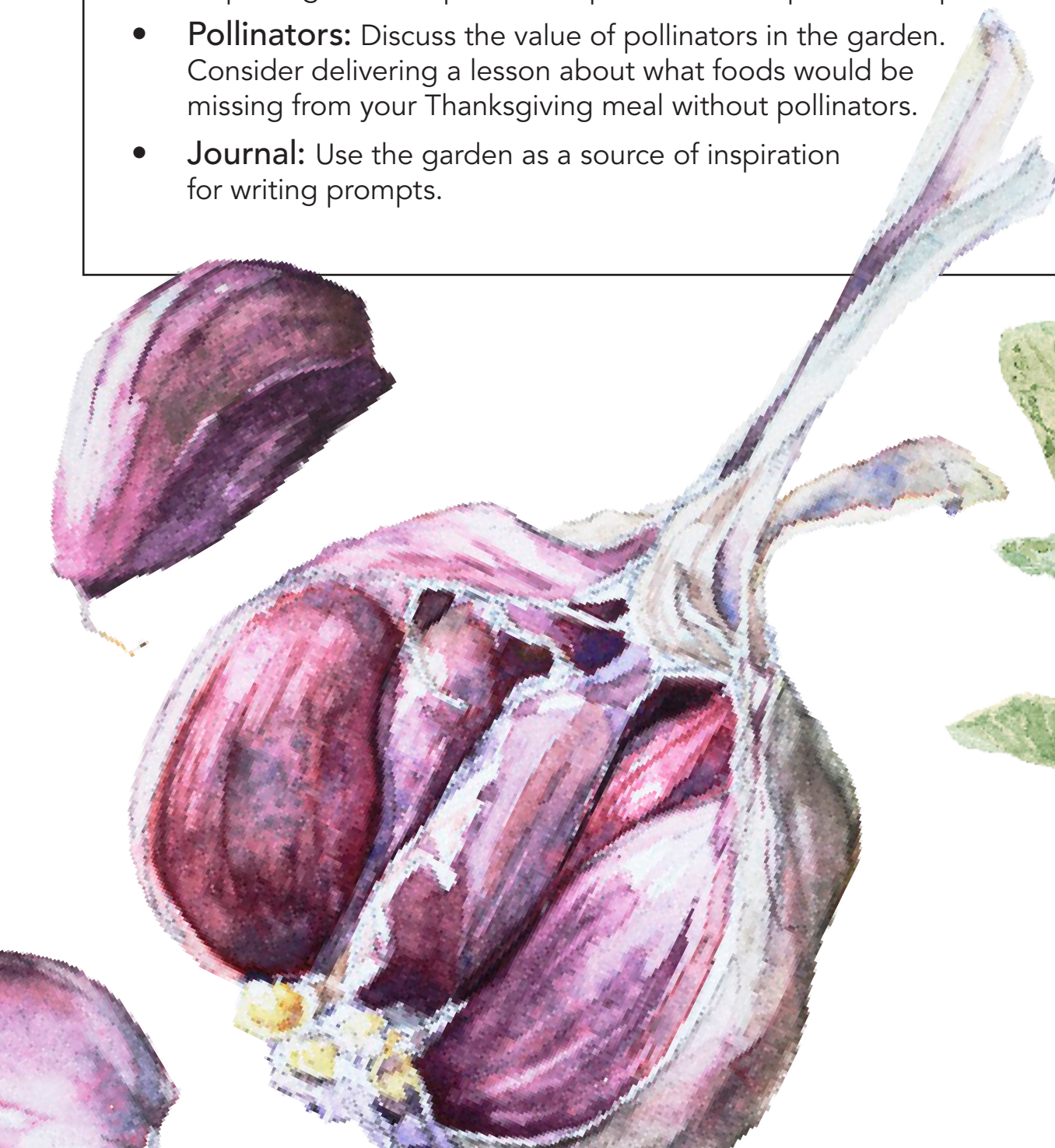
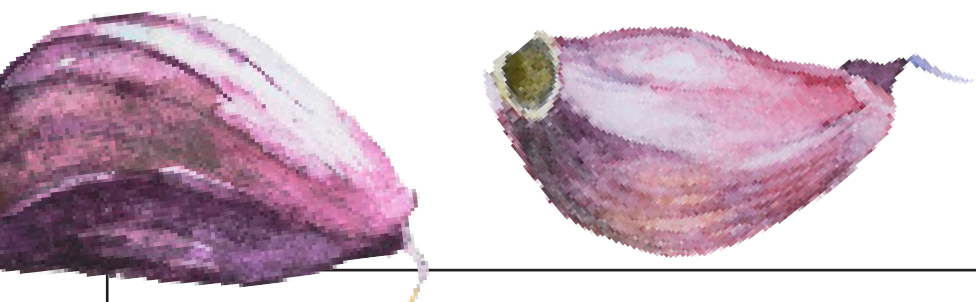
- Continue harvesting cool-season crops.
- Plant spring-blooming flower bulbs.
- Plant garlic before any winter freezes.
- Taking a soil sample now allows plenty of time to get the report back.
- Apply lime will be of more benefit to the soil next year than if it is applied in the spring before planting. Apply dolomitic limestone to get both calcium and magnesium using your soil test results as a guide.

## ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

- Incorporate the school garden as part of any Thanksgiving celebration.

## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:

- **Rocks and soils:** Collect samples of garden soil and compare the soil's physical attributes to soils around campus or from around the county. While you are at it, review the results of the soil test you did in August.
- **Conservation of resources:** Research composting and cover crops to learn how these practices can help our garden crops and our planet. Make a plan and implement these practices in the garden.
- **Pollinators:** Discuss the value of pollinators in the garden. Consider delivering a lesson about what foods would be missing from your Thanksgiving meal without pollinators.
- **Journal:** Use the garden as a source of inspiration for writing prompts.





# December



## GARDENING ACTIVITIES:

- Make sure the garden has volunteers to care for the garden during winter break.
- Clean up any spent beds.
- Give your garden some color by planting some cool-season annuals, like violas, primroses, and pansies.
- Sow wildflower seeds now for spring color. Consult your local Extension office for perennial native species that will come back year after year!
- This is a good time to plant dormant fruit trees and roses.

## ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

- Reevaluate your garden program midyear.
- Based on your goals, determine measurable signs that you are achieving them. Report back to the administration and the school garden committee.
- Recruit new committee members and volunteers.

## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:

- **Volume:** Students can calculate how much mulch is needed for pathways, how much compost to add, or how much soil is required to fill a raised bed. Use information learned to plan purchases for the school garden.
- **Rocks and soils:** Classify garden soil as sand, clay, or silt using a jar test.
- **Culture and customs:** Research foods that are important to different cultures and plan for a multicultural garden.
- **Research:** Practice researching skills by researching and creating a how-to guide for planting a favorite vegetable.







## GARDENING ACTIVITIES:

- Begin planning this spring's vegetable garden now. Consult your garden journal to better plan for the growing season. Were there certain varieties that were more prone to disease than others? Were there germination or production issues?
- Take a seed and garden supply inventory. Do you need to order more tools or fertilizer? Make a note of any favorite varieties and order early before supply runs out.
- You may have seeds left over from last year. Check their viability by placing some in damp paper towels and observing the germination percentage. If the percentage is low, order new ones.
- Check with local retail garden or nursery stores for resources and possible donations.
- Start indoor seeds.
- Order seed catalogs, which can also be useful in the classroom. Consider making plant labels from the photographs. Use the days-until-harvest numbers and plant spacing for math lessons.
- If you lack in-ground gardening space, review seed catalogs for dwarf plants and varieties that perform well in containers.

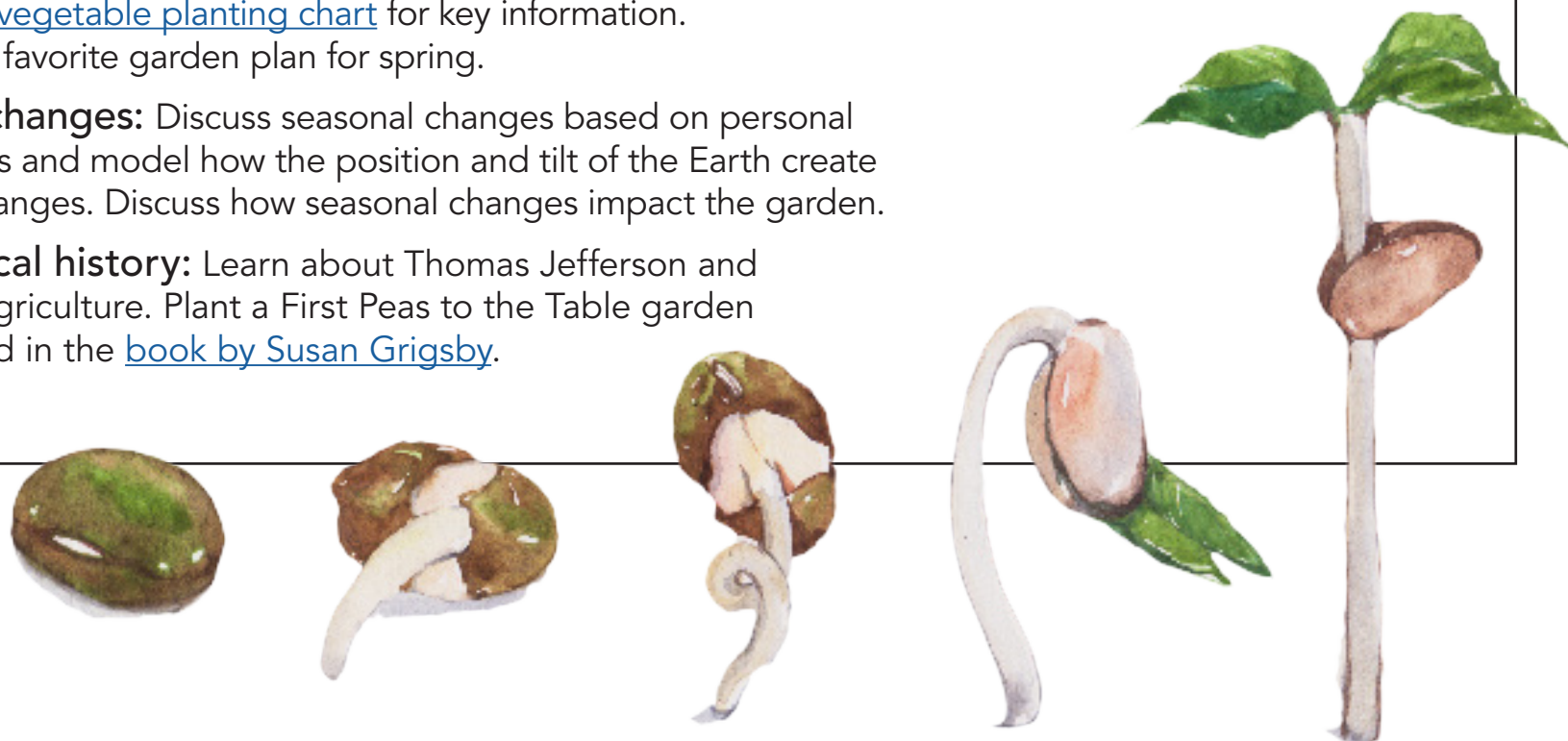
## ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

- Check for grant opportunities. Local businesses are a good source of materials and donations. Acknowledge local donations by adding a banner with the business name in the garden or putting a plaque inside the school listing donors.



## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:

- **Math:** Word problems are a great way to connect with the garden even when the weather is chilly. They can be simple for younger students or more complex for older students. Create math word problems around addition, subtraction, multiplication, etc. For example, if we can plant 15 kale plants in each raised bed, how many could we plant in a garden with 4 raised beds? For integrated projects, have students plan the garden, calculate its area, and determine the amount of seeds or transplants for a given space.
- **Plant needs:** Have students design a garden space that meets the needs of vegetable plants. Use UGA Extension's [vegetable planting chart](#) for key information. Vote on the favorite garden plan for spring.
- **Seasonal changes:** Discuss seasonal changes based on personal observations and model how the position and tilt of the Earth create seasonal changes. Discuss how seasonal changes impact the garden.
- **Biographical history:** Learn about Thomas Jefferson and his role in agriculture. Plant a First Peas to the Table garden as described in the [book by Susan Grigsby](#).







## GARDENING ACTIVITIES:

- Make early plantings of your choice of cool season crops. Examples include carrots, collards, lettuce, mustard, English peas, Irish potatoes, radishes, spinach, and turnips.
- Practice crop rotation by not planting the same crops in the same planting beds each season.
- Start planting warm-season transplants. Peppers and eggplants take about eight weeks to grow from seed to transplant size, while tomatoes will take six weeks. When the seedlings form their third set of true leaves, transplant them into larger containers.
- Start a compost system or reevaluate your current one.
- Plan an herb bed for cooking and creating an interesting landscape. Good options include parsley, cilantro, chives, rosemary, sage, and lavender. Choose a sunny spot and plant seeds or transplants once the danger of frost has passed (late March or early April).
- Plan to add herbaceous perennial flowers to your flowering landscape/pollinator garden (including coneflower, milkweed, gaillardia, rudbeckia varieties).
- Make a cold frame or hotbed to start early vegetables or flowers.
- Prune and train muscadines and save some to make cuttings for a propagation lesson.
- Prune other fruit trees and blueberries.
- Plant new fruit trees and other perennial plants.

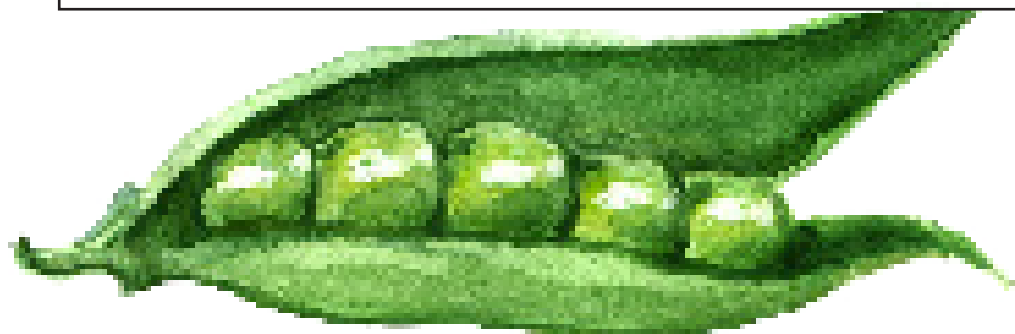
## ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

- Plan an activity around Arbor Day, which is the third Friday in February in Georgia. Partner with the Georgia Forestry Commission.



## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:

- **Weather:** Use the UGA Weather Network to analyze seasonal weather changes. How do seasonal weather changes impact the garden? Look at chill hours for fruit trees and research chill hour requirements.
- **Area and perimeter:** Understand the concepts of perimeter and area by applying them to a real-life situation and calculate the perimeter and area of the garden and raised beds.
- **Life cycles:** Create a native bee nesting box and learn about the life cycles of native bees. Install in the garden and observe throughout the year.
- **Maps:** Create a map of the garden. Include a legend, title, and important garden features.
- **Narrative writing:** Ask students to reflect on what they have learned in the garden.





# March



## GARDENING ACTIVITIES:

- For north Georgia, continue planting cool-season crops.
- Harvest cool-season crops.
- Preventive management is preferred over reactive pest control. Identify and monitor problems before acting. Consider cultural control options before biological control agents (predators, parasitoids).
- Learn to identify the predatory insects that can help keep aphids and other pests under control.
- If a chemical control measure is warranted, consult your local Extension agent. Use the least potent options, like insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils, botanical insecticides, and organic and synthetic pesticides, always following the label.
- Protect new plant growth, especially strawberries, from slugs. Nonchemical control options include barriers and pitfall traps.
- Use a soil thermometer to help you know when to plant vegetables. Some cool season crops (onions, kale, lettuce, and spinach) can be planted when the soil is consistently at or above 40 degrees Fahrenheit.
- "Harden off" new transplants grown indoors before installing them in the garden. This process involves gradually exposing them to full sun and outside temperatures over a seven to 10 day period.
- Consider including insectary plants (e.g., Alyssum, Phacelia, coriander, candytuft, sunflower, yarrow, and dill) to attract beneficial insects to the garden.

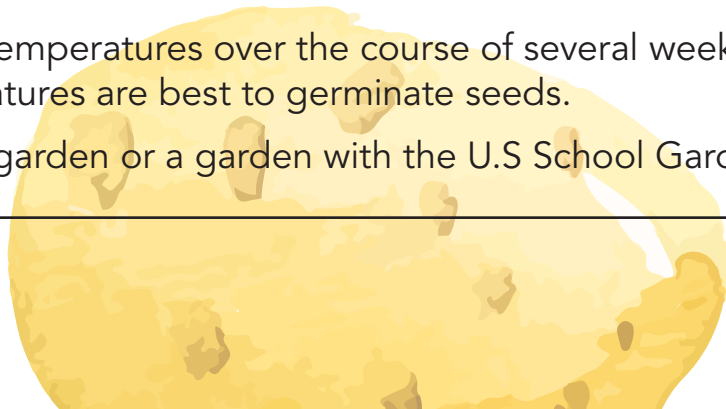
## ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

- Plan a special event for Georgia School Garden Day on the first day of Georgia Agriculture Awareness Week in March.
- Work with your cafeteria staff to see how you can work the school garden into the Department of Education's Harvest of the Month program.



## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:

- **Measurement:** Have a bean race! Plant beans and have students measure their height as they grow every few days. Graph the results.
- **Multiply and divide:** Students can calculate how many seeds are needed to plant each garden crop. Look up plant spacing on seed packets or refer to UGA Extension's [vegetable planting chart](#).
- **Life cycles:** Plant seeds in the garden. Observe and draw them during different stages in their life cycle.
- **Weather:** Collect data on 4-inch soil temperatures over the course of several weeks. Conduct an experiment to determine what temperatures are best to germinate seeds.
- **History:** Research and plant a victory garden or a garden with the U.S School Garden Army.







## GARDENING ACTIVITIES:

- Continue to harvest any remaining cool-season crops.
- Plant summer vegetables or prepare the garden for summer break. Will you continue to grow crops or will you put the garden beds to rest for the season?
- Schedule volunteers to help with summer care.
- Focus on low maintenance plants that will thrive on their own without much attention. Select plants that are drought tolerant and produce vigorous foliage that will smother or outcompete weeds, such as sweet potatoes.
- Consider planting sweet potatoes in late April or early May for a fall harvest.
- Before leaving for the summer, cover the garden with a thick layer of mulch to discourage weeds and decrease water loss. The mulch will break down over the summer, providing organic matter and enriching the soil for next year's crops.
- Build the soil during the summer. If you are not growing vegetables in your garden over the summer, consider planting a summer cover crop to suppress weeds and add organic matter to your soil. Buckwheat is a good summer cover crop in most areas and is great for keeping weeds down and attracting pollinators.



## ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

- Write in your garden journal throughout the growing season, making notes of successes and failures and noting pest problems.
- Host a garden event. This could be a wonderful way to showcase the school's drama department (soliloquies in the garden); art department (art show in the garden); or chorus and band (concerts in the garden).



## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:

- **Measurement:** Create a salad dressing based on ratios or by measuring ingredients, and taste on fresh salad.
- **Life cycles:** Go on a life-cycles scavenger hunt in the garden and find plants at different stages in their life cycle.
- **Pollination:** Observe pollinators in the garden. Look for flower parts, insects, and pollen. Hand pollinate summer squash and watch the fruit grow.
- **Garden economy:** Have a student workday in the garden. Use the garden as a real-life example for discussing a variety of economic terms and topics, including productive resources, consumers, producers, and the price of goods in the marketplace.
- **Weather:** Have students use the UGA Weather Network to determine the average last day of frost for your area. Look at chill hours for fruit trees and research chill hour requirements.





# May



## GARDENING ACTIVITIES:

- Garlic is ready to harvest once the leaves begin to turn yellow and die back. Shake off any soil clinging to the bulb and store the bulbs in a cool, dry place. When the bulbs are dry (after three to four weeks), clean with a soft brush, cut off the stems and roots, and store in a cool, dark place.
- Keep on top of pest management.
- Instead of deadheading, let self-seeding annuals go to seed. New seedlings will appear for another crop of summer flowers.
- Keep strawberry beds clean by spreading bark mulch around the plants and lifting the flowers and leaves above the mulch.
- Avoid “split” radishes by going easy on the watering. Harvest when the crown begins to show above the soil.
- If new potatoes were planted in February, check to see whether it’s time to harvest. Once the plants begin to bloom, dig them by gently bringing up the soil with a pitchfork about a foot away from the plant. Separate the tubers by hand.
- Clean up your garden. Diseases and pests can remain on infected and dead plant material, making it easy for them to attack other plants.
- Consider hosting a workday with volunteers one Saturday per month to catch up on weeding or performing other large tasks, such as installing drip irrigation equipment for your beds.

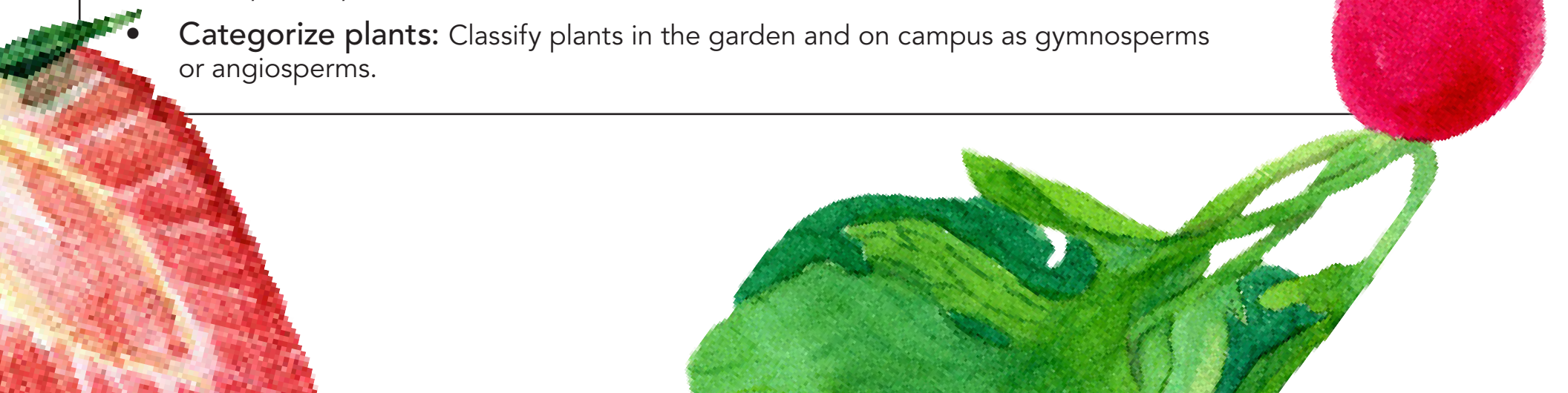
## ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

- Meet with the gardeners to review the garden year, discussing both successes and failures.
- Poll teachers about their use of the garden. Consider which school subjects could be added to the school garden curriculum for next year.
- Thank those involved, including educators, volunteers, staff, students, anyone who helps in the garden.



## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:

- **Flow of energy in an ecosystem:** Observe the garden and create a model to demonstrate the garden food chain including sunlight, producers, consumers, and decomposers.
- **Graphing:** Graph the harvest by unit, by pound, etc. To extend into money skills, calculate how much money students could earn by selling the vegetables produced. For older students, have them calculate expenses and potential profit.
- **Taste test:** Create a taste test to examine the parts of the plant we eat. Include roots, stems, leaves, and flowers.
- **Categorize plants:** Classify plants in the garden and on campus as gymnosperms or angiosperms.







# June

## GARDENING ACTIVITIES:

- Harvest warm-season crops.
- Weed and water.
- Plant seeds now to grow a pumpkin crop in October.
- Once fruit sets on tomato plants, apply a low-nitrogen fertilizer following label directions. Too much nitrogen encourages more foliage and less fruit.

## ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

- Develop the budget for next year's garden.



# July



## GARDENING ACTIVITIES:

- Continue to harvest warm-season crops.
- Plant herbs for use as school begins.



## ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

- Include the garden as part of any preplanning activities for the upcoming school year.
- Include tours of the garden for new teachers and invite them to be part of the school garden team.

## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:

- **School is out**, but many schools offer school garden camps that integrate garden activities and cooking. This is a great opportunity to use the garden year-round.



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