

## Establishing a Connect to Protect Garden at Your School



Does your school lack a garden, even though it has the space for it? Consider joining forces with Fairchild's Connect to Protect Network to be part of the solution to Miami's disappearing pine rockland flora and fauna, and plant a Connect to Protect Garden. If you join our network, we will **provide 10 free pine rockland plants**. If school administrators approve and the campus has space, we will be happy to provide your school with these plants, in a free "Pine Rockland Starter Kit." We've gathered advice from some Connect to Protect Network teachers whom we've deemed "School Garden Warriors," since some have seen their hard work and efforts vanish before their eyes for various reasons, while others have beat the odds and continued to expand their school garden over time. Here is their advice about starting and cultivating a garden on school grounds.

- **Determine an ideal location**, with alternates just in case, before proposing the idea. Look for locations that are open and offer much sunlight, and have an adequate amount of space (for at least 10 shrub-sized plants, but leave room for more plants if you want the garden to expand). Try to confirm that other departments do not already have plans for the site(s) you have chosen (such as turning empty lawn space into a sports field, portable, etc.).
- **Make specific connections between the garden project and curriculum**. While aesthetic purposes are great and are beneficial to your cause, the probability of administrative support increases if there is an academic purpose as well. (And the more grade levels/course curricula addressed, the better!)
- **Recruit other faculty and staff to support your proposal** so that the garden project has school-wide support. Spread the word about the garden proposal as much as you can.
- **Identify funding sources before presenting your proposal**. Even partial funding, small donations, or completed grant applications demonstrate your sense of ownership and responsibility for the garden. Administration will also be more likely to accept the proposal if there is external funding. Also, emphasize that Fairchild's Connect to Protect Network will provide 10 free plants in a "Starter Kit," and opportunity for additional free plants after throughout the year as inventory allows.
- **Start out with a small, manageable phase of the garden while proposing the idea**. A small project can grow after approval; large projects that may be difficult to manage may come off as intimidating, expensive, or a hassle, and may not be approved. You can always aim to expand on your garden after it is established and secured.

Please note that other businesses, not just schools, also qualify to be Connect to Protect Network members. Any businesses that can maintain a garden can receive their free Starter Kit of 10 plants. For homeowners, the limit is 5 plants. To contact us, email [ConnectToProtect@fairchildgarden.org](mailto:ConnectToProtect@fairchildgarden.org).

All photos and much of this advice is courtesy of Andy Kearns, Jose Marti MAST Academy