



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Getting Started: Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Guide

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## Acknowledgements

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Photos courtesy of Linden Tree Photography  
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**Georgia Organics is a member supported, non-profit organization connecting organic food from Georgia farms to Georgia families. We believe food should be community-based, not commodity-based.**

# Table of Contents

## Chapter 1: Overview of Farm to Early Care and Education

<b>1.1</b> - Introduction: About the Toolkit and Importance of Farm to Early Care and Education in Georgia .....	6
<b>1.2</b> - Overview of Farm to Early Care and Education .....	7
<b>1.3</b> - Farm to Early Care and Education in the U.S. and Georgia .....	9
<b>1.4</b> - Getting Started: Setting your Farm to Early Care and Education Goals .....	13
<b>1.5</b> - Farm to Early Care and Education: Addressing Social & Racial Equity.....	16

---

## Chapter 2: Exploring Gardening with Young Children

<b>2.1</b> - Introduction to Gardening with Children .....	18
<b>2.2</b> - Growing an Indoor Garden .....	19
<b>2.3</b> - Outdoor Gardening: Where, When, and What to Plant .....	21
<b>2.4</b> - How to Plant, Care, and Harvest with Young Children .....	23
<b>2.5</b> - Simple Outdoor Gardening Activities by GELDS Domain .....	25
<b>2.6</b> - Tips for Behavior Management in the Outdoor Garden .....	26
<b>2.7</b> - Tips for Safety in the Outdoor Garden .....	27

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## Chapter 3: Exploring Cooking and Tasting with Young Children

<b>3.1</b> - Introduction: Cooking and Tasting with Young Children .....	29
<b>3.2</b> - Hand-on Cooking for Young Children .....	30
<b>3.3</b> - Recipes for Young Children .....	31
<b>3.4</b> - Tasting with Young Children .....	33
<b>3.5</b> - Tips for Behavior Management while Cooking and Tasting .....	34
<b>3.6</b> - Tips for Safety while Cooking and Tasting .....	35

## Chapter 4: Procuring Local Food for the Child and Adult Care Food Program

4.1 - Meeting CACFP Meal Patterns and Best Practices with Local Food Purchasing .....	37
4.2 - Allowable Uses of CACFP Funds for Farm to Early Care and Education Related Activities .....	39
4.3 - Tips to Promote Local Food .....	40

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## Chapter 5: Engaging Families, Staff and Community

5.1 - Strategies for Family Engagement .....	42
5.2 - Strategies for Staff Engagement .....	43
5.3 - Strategies for Community Engagement .....	44

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## Appendix:

A: Curriculums and Activity Resources that support Farm to Early Care and Education .....	47
B: Aligning Farm to Early Care and Education Activities with Georgia Early Learning Standards .....	49
C: Aligning Farm to Early Care and Education Activities with Standards, Indicators, and Goals .....	50
D: Farm to Early Care and Education and Head Start: A Natural Alignment .....	51
E: Farm to Early Care and Education Book List .....	52
F: Songs about Gardens and Food .....	53
G: Poisonous and Toxic Plants .....	54
H: School Garden Planting and Harvest Calendar .....	56
I: Local Foods in CACFP Questions and Answers .....	58
J: CACFP Allowable Purchases to Support Farm to Early Care and Education Programs .....	63

# Introduction

## Dear Early Care and Education Champion:

Young children who garden, cook healthy snacks, meet farmers, and taste fresh, local food are engaging in something special and important. Research supports that notion -- Farm to Early Care and Education (Farm to ECE) activities like taste tests, cooking lessons and gardening offer repeated exposure to healthy foods, promote lifelong healthy eating habits, and decrease obesity risk in childhood and beyond. The purpose of this guide is to cover the most important components of Farm to ECE and give you a few tips to get started.

In this guide, we will cover topics such as:

- How to get started
- The basics: gardening, cooking and tasting with young children
- Finding and procuring local food for your child care program
- Engaging parents and community members

## How to use this guide

If you are starting a Farm to ECE program, we recommend you read through this guide to get an idea of where you would like to begin your journey. You don't need to do everything at once -- in fact, we encourage you to start with just one activity and then think about how you can add activities as you go.

For example: start with a classroom activity exploring a seasonal food, like reading a book about the life cycle of a carrot. Then, try a planting activity, like planting carrot seeds in an outdoor garden plot. Then do a taste test, like comparing the taste of purple carrots to orange carrots. Then plan a visit to a farm or a meetup at a farmers market to see where the seasonal food is grown and sold in the community. After that, explore local procurement and celebrate local foods during lunch by inviting parents to come try them too.



## Reality Check!

We realize that if you work in an ECE setting, the last thing you are worried about is whether your squash trellis is tied up or whether it is time to harvest the tomatoes. You are busy answering calls from parents, filling out forms, dealing with staff turn-over, and focused on state assessment observations.

In a perfect world, your Farm to ECE projects will not be "extra," but will simply help you provide high quality education that aligns with the standards, tools and programs that guide your work day to day: Georgia Early Learning Development Standards (GELDS), Quality Rated (QR), Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), as well as licencing and administrative regulations. In addition, if you are NAEYC accredited or are an Early Head Start or Head Start program - Farm to ECE can align with these requirements as well. See Appendix B and C for more information on aligning Farm to ECE with existing standards and indicators.

## Who is this guide for?

Farm to ECE includes an array of activities and adapts to all kinds of ECE settings such as preschools, early childhood programs, family child care homes, Head Start/ Early Head Start and programs in K-12 school districts.

This guide is designed for early care and education administrators, teachers, chefs and support staff. It is also for parents, farmers and community members. Everyone has an important role to play in growing Farm to ECE initiatives!

## What's not in this guide?

While this guide does have some great activities and lessons, it is not a curriculum. However, there are many curriculums that we love and recommend - so reach out to us! Also, this guide does not go in-depth on every subject. There are many books and websites dedicated to gardening with children, local procurement, and hands-on education activities with children and parents. Check out [georgiaorganics.org](http://georgiaorganics.org) for more information, and see Appendix A for additional curriculums and resources that can help you.

## Share your progress!



Keep us posted on your progress and include these hashtags in your social media posts: #gafarmtoece #georgiaorganics #farmtoece #farmtoschool

# Overview of Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education

Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) initiatives connect young children with healthy, locally-grown foods and support farmers in their communities.

The goal of Farm to ECE is to:

- Help children develop healthy lifelong eating habits through exposure to gardening, hands-on food and nutrition education, cooking and local foods.
- Increase access to locally grown, healthy food in meals and snacks.
- Enhance the quality of the early childcare education experience.
- Create an environment that enables children and families to make healthier choices.

## Farm to ECE Activities include engaging children in:

- ✓ Gardening
- ✓ Hands-on cooking
- ✓ Taste Tests
- ✓ Eating locally-grown food in meals and snacks
- ✓ Meeting local farmers
- ✓ Standards-aligned food and garden lessons



### Farm to ECE activities can be strengthened by:

- Parent and community involvement
- Staff training
- Wellness policies
- Farm to ECE promotions through parent communications



## Benefits of Farm to ECE programs may include:

- ✓ **Fostering Academic Growth**  
Children learn better by doing - gardening, cooking and food activities connect with math, science, literacy and much more.
- ✓ **Advancing Equity**  
Farm to ECE programs increase access to high-quality learning environments.
- ✓ **Better Nutrition**  
When young children grow, explore and taste new vegetables, they are more likely to eat and love them.
- ✓ **Enhancing Family Health**  
Farm to ECE activities create the space for families to share, learn, and build healthy habits together.<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ **Supporting the Local Economy**  
Agriculture is Georgia's largest industry. For every \$1 spent on local food, another 40 cents - \$1.60 of economic activity is generated.

**In 2018, 63% of Georgia school districts that participated in farm to school also reached preschool children under the age of five - that's over twice the national average!**

<sup>1</sup> Upstream-Oregon HIA 2011 - Upstream Public Health. Health impact assessment HB 2800: Oregon farm to school and school garden policy. 2014

Farm to ECE activities align with many existing and mandatory indicators, criteria, standards, tools and programs. See examples:

Alignment of Farm to ECE with Early Care Standards and Programs		
ECE indicators, criteria, standards, tools and programs	Categories	Example Activity
<b>Georgia Early Learning Development Standards (GELDS)</b>	Cognitive Development and General Knowledge - Math CD:MA 1- The child will organize, represent, and build knowledge and quantity.	Children taste a variety of apples, vote on their favorite, and record the results
<b>Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - 3rd Edition (ECERS-3)</b>	Language and Literacy  5.1- Helping children expand vocabulary	Teachers are heard talking to the children about the garden and what the children are doing. They name the items growing (radish, carrot, collards), and describe the tools (trowel, spade, watering can) explaining their use.
<b>Quality Rated (QR)</b>	Indicator 3.1 Staff use of books with children	Teachers are seen reading books about gardening with interest and enthusiasm.
<b>USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)</b>	USDA CACFP Best Practices: Incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals.	Each week, highlight one item from Georgia's Harvest of the Month on the lunch menu.
<b>Head Start</b>	Sub-domain: Gross Motor Goal IT-PMP 4. Child demonstrates effective and efficient use of large muscles to explore the environment.	Have children help carry gardening tools into the garden space, navigating different surfaces and moving around garden beds.
<b>National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)</b>	2.G.07 Curriculum Content Area for Cognitive Development: Science	Scientific concepts include things such as life cycles of organisms, structure and property of matter, weather, seasons, time, light and shadow.

You can include Farm to ECE activities in as little as 10 minutes a day. See these examples with suggested GELDS.

Sample Week				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Read "Plant a Little Seed" by Bonnie Christensen. (CLL2)	Children observe a variety of seeds with a magnifying glass and sort them by size and shape. Sing "The Flower Song." (CD-MA4, PDM6)	Discussion: Children observe the contents of their lunch and search for seeds - or fruits that hold the seeds (CD-SC3)	Children take one seed and place it in a damp paper towel inside a ziplock bag. Count the days until germination! (PDM6)	Children taste a variety of seeds and record results! (CD:MA1, PDM4)

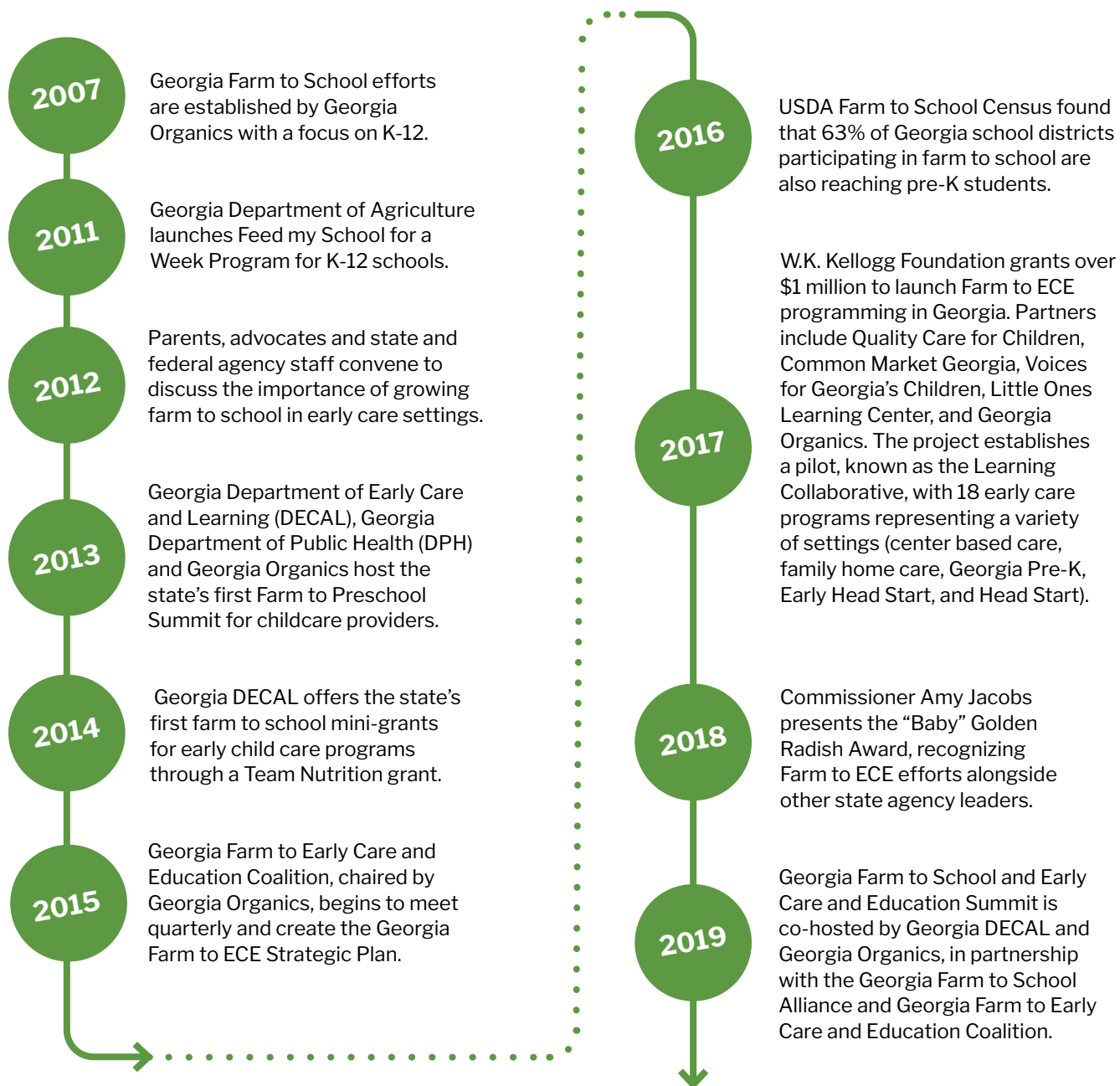
# Farm to Early Care and Education in the US and Georgia

Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) initiatives connect young children with healthy, locally-grown foods and support farmers in their communities.

Farm to ECE activities are on the rise nationally and in Georgia. Surveys conducted by the National Farm to School Network found that 48 states and Washington, D.C. have farm to school programs in early care and education sites - up from 39 states in 2012.



## Timeline of Farm to ECE in Georgia

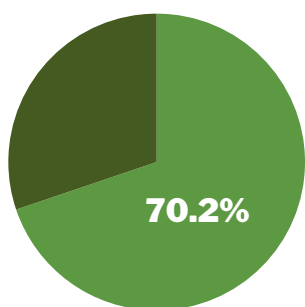




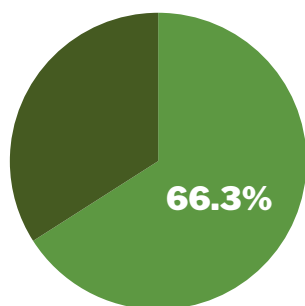
The **2014 Georgia Farm to School Survey** of 859 early care and education centers found that 94% of centers had conducted some type of Farm to ECE activity within the past year. The most frequently conducted activities were:

1. Educating children about food, nutrition, or where food comes from;
2. Cooking or preparing food with children; and
3. Serving meals or snacks with at least some locally grown food.

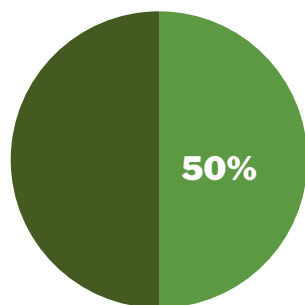
### Motivations for wanting to add or expand Farm to ECE activities



**Teaching children about where food comes from and/or how it is grown**



**Improving children's health and nutrition**



**Providing children with experiential learning opportunities**



### Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Coalition

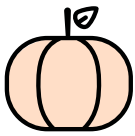
The Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Coalition is a network that joins stakeholders in early care, food, farming, and nutrition to coalesce resources, support Farm to ECE, and create a dialogue for building statewide programming. Over two dozen agencies, organizations and businesses actively support Farm to ECE in Georgia. Members of the Georgia Farm to ECE Coalition include:

- Black Child Development Institute
- Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
- Captain Planet Foundation
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Children's Healthcare of Atlanta/Strong4Life
- The Common Market - Southeast
- Georgia Department of Education
- Food Well Alliance
- Southern Crescent Technical College
- Georgia Association for the Education of Young Children
- Georgia Child Care Association
- Georgia Department of Agriculture
- Georgia Department of Public Health
- Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students
- Georgia Family Connection Partnership
- Georgia Head Start State Collaboration Office
- Georgia State University-Health Policy Center
- Georgia Organics
- HealthMPowers
- Little Ones Learning Center
- Quality Care for Children
- Mercer University
- Sheltering Arms
- United Way
- University of Georgia
- University of Georgia - Cooperative Extension
- United States Department of Agriculture
- Voices for Georgia's Children

## Connecting with the Farm to ECE Community in Georgia

There are several ways you can connect with the Farm to ECE community in Georgia.

### Campaigns



#### October Farm to School Month

Each year, Georgia Organics provides free resources, lessons and videos to celebrate a locally grown fruit or vegetable.

**For more information:**

<https://farmtoschool.georgiaorganics.org/october-f2s-month>



#### Harvest of the Month

Quality Care for Children offers a free downloadable calendar that features monthly Harvest of the Month produce. Focusing on just one seasonal fruit or vegetable is a great way to get started.

**For more information:**

<https://www.qualitycareforchildren.org/hom>



#### Georgia Pre-K Week

Each October, Voices for Georgia's Children coordinates Georgia Pre- K week, to emphasize the importance of quality early childhood education. If you have Georgia Pre-K classroom, invite a special guest to read a children's book about gardening, cooking or food.

**For more information:**

[www.georgiavoices.org/pre-k-week/](http://www.georgiavoices.org/pre-k-week/)

#### CACFP Week

CACFP Week is a national education and information campaign sponsored annually the third week of March by the National CACFP Sponsors Association. The campaign is designed to raise awareness of how the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program works to combat hunger. This week is a great time to promote how your Farm to ECE efforts can increase and improve participation in CACFP.

### Newsletters

Sign up for Georgia Organics Farm to School ebite:

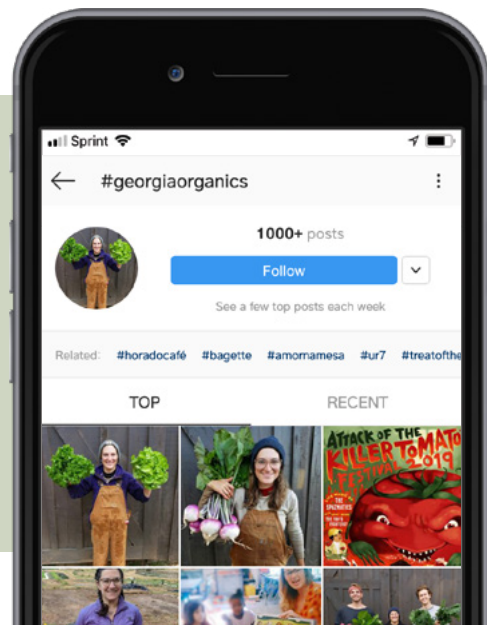
<https://farmtoschool.georgiaorganics.org>

### Social

#### Share your activities!

[#georgiaorganics](#) [@georgiaorganics](#)

[#gafarmtoece](#) [#farmtoschool](#) [#farmtoschoolchampions](#)



## Conferences



### Georgia Farm to School and Early Care and Education Summit

This biennial Summit convenes educators, administrators and parents to learn about and share innovative Farm to ECE and Farm to School activities.

**For more information:**

<https://farmtoschool.georgiaorganics.org/>



### Georgia Organics Annual Conference and Expo

Farmers, gardeners, chefs, educators and activists attend this annual conference for a deep dive on subjects ranging from Farm to School to small-scale farming techniques.

**For more information:**

[conference.georgiaorganics.org](https://conference.georgiaorganics.org)



### Georgia Child Care Conferences

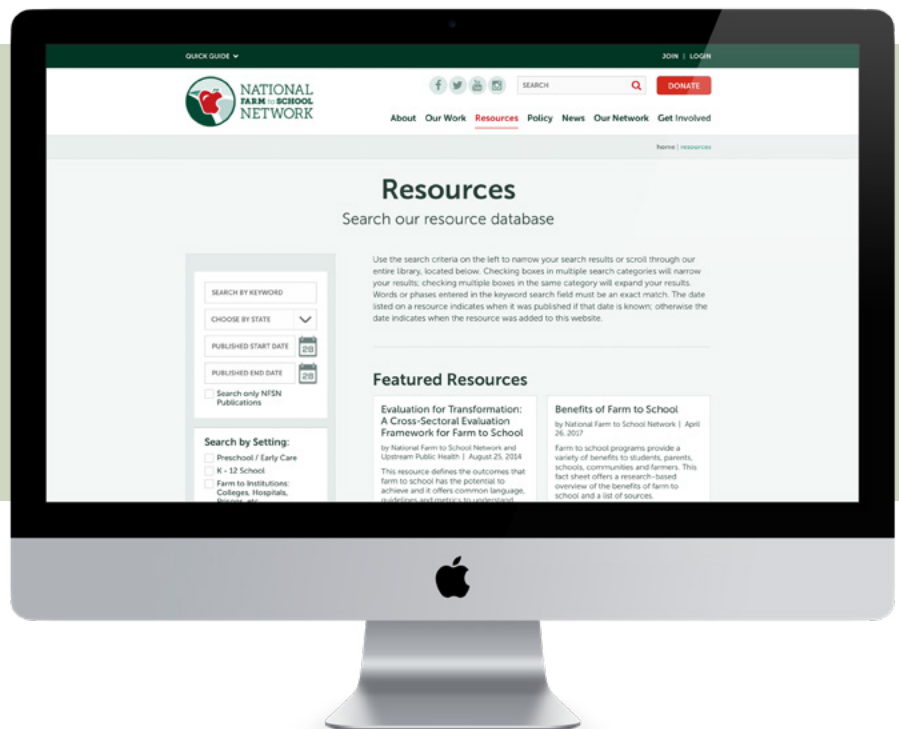
Always check the presentation and workshop schedule for ECE conferences hosted by agencies and organizations that directly serve ECE providers: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Georgia Head Start, Georgia Child Care Association (GCCA) and Georgia Association of the Education of Young Children (GAEYC) - many times they will include sessions on Farm to ECE! (And, if they don't, consider submitting a proposal for the next one!)

## Webinars

The National Farm to School Network has many great Farm to ECE webinars.

The archive can be accessed at

<https://farmtoschool.georgiaorganics.org/>



# Getting Started: Setting your Farm to Early Care and Education Goals

Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) offers many strategies to improve the health of children, increase the quality of educational experiences, and promote valuable family engagement opportunities.

Gather your team and follow these first steps to develop a lasting initiative in your community:

## Step 1: Consider your time, talent, and treasures.

**Start where you are with what you have.**

**People and Time** — Who in your community has the capacity to contribute to Farm to ECE activities? Who are the Farm to ECE champions? Teachers, administrators, parents, grandparents? What unique skills or knowledge exist within your community? Local farmers, local chefs? How can relationships with local organizations or institutions contribute to farm to school activities? Master gardeners, colleges/universities?

**Space** — What space do you have inside or outside that can be utilized for Farm to ECE activities? A room with large tables for cooking, a covered outdoor area, a picnic table? Are there places in your community that could be utilized for Farm to ECE activities? A local farm, farmers market?

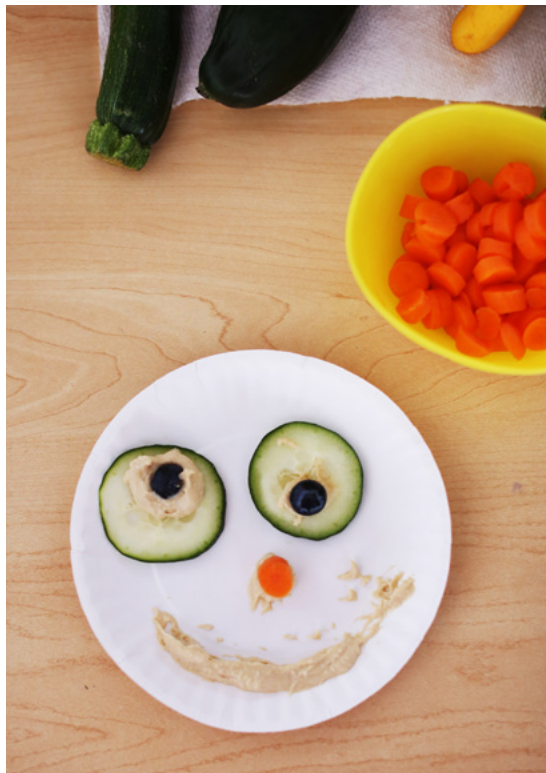
**Tools** — What tools do you have available for Farm to ECE activities? Books about plants or food, planting or garden supplies, refrigerator, or food preparation tools?

**Money** — What monetary resources are available within your program/site or community? Local businesses that could provide in-kind donations, budget line items, available grants, parent group fundraisers?

## Step 2: Decide on a focus area.

With your available resources in mind, choose one or two areas to focus on.

- Edible Gardens
- Taste Tests
- Hands-on Cooking Activities
- Classroom Food / Garden Lessons
- Farmer Visits or Farm Field Trips
- Local Food in Snacks and Meals
- Wellness/Farm to ECE Policy
- Parent and Community Engagement
- Staff Training



### Step 3: Develop an attainable goal.

Within your focus area, develop attainable goals for a reasonable time frame.

	WHAT?	WHEN?
<b>We will</b>	build two raised beds	before the beginning of the school year.
<b>We will</b>	go on one farm field trip	before the end of the school year.
<b>We will</b>	do one seasonal taste test	sometime this month.
<b>We will</b>	offer locally grown apples at least once	with lunch in the fall.

### Step 4: Make a plan of action (Who, What, When).

Determine which small steps will help you reach your goal. For example:

WHO	WILL DO WHAT ACTION	WITH WHAT RESOURCES	BY WHEN
Angela	will set up a meeting with the local Master Gardener	to determine the best site for two raised beds	before the end of the month
Steve	will research local farms that visit schools or offer field trips	and send suggestions and possible dates to the director	by the end of next week
Damon	will look for books about apples	in the school library	and send a list to teachers by the end of this week
Liliana	will visit the farmers market	to talk to local farmers about wholesale prices and possible delivery of produce	this Saturday



### Step 5: Promote your work.

Share the actions you take and the goals you set with your community. Ideas include sharing information on parent and community announcements or the marquis or sharing photos on bulletin boards, in parent newsletters, on your website or on your social media pages. You can also invite local media to visit your program during the Farm to ECE activities.

## Getting Started: Setting your Farm to ECE Goals (Worksheet)

**What are your Current Resources?** .....

<b>People and Time</b>	
<b>Space</b>	
<b>Tools</b>	
<b>Budget</b>	

**What is Your Focus Area?** .....

Edible Gardens  
Taste Tests  
Hands-on Cooking Activities  
Classroom Food / Garden Lessons  
Farmer Visits or Farm Field Trips

Local Food in Snacks and Meals  
Wellness/Farm to ECE Policy  
Parent and Community Engagement  
Staff Training

**What is an Attainable Goal?** .....

In \_\_\_\_\_ (time frame), we will \_\_\_\_\_ (goal).

**What is your Plan of Action towards that Goal?** .....

	<b>Who</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>By When</b>
<b>Step 1</b>			
<b>Step 2</b>			
<b>Step 3</b>			

**How Will You Share Your Work?** .....

Announcements  
Bulletin Board  
School Marquis  
Parent Newsletters

Emails  
Website  
Social Media  
Local Media

# Farm to Early Care and Education: Addressing Social and Racial Equity



Georgia Organics is committed to addressing root causes of food system inequities as a means of creating viable food systems solutions that combat disparities existing among children and their families. Racial equity in the food and educational system will be achieved when race and other socio-economic factors no longer determine food systems outcomes.

These outcomes include access to food system jobs and opportunities, access to farmland, access to healthy and nutritious food as well as access to good labor practices and fair wages. In addition, we believe children, families and child care staff should have daily, affordable access to healthy, fresh foods.

School gardens and kitchen classrooms are environments that support students' identities and reflect diversity, equity, and justice. The instructional strategies that are utilized through Farm to ECE activities support diverse learning styles and allow for deep exploration. A comprehensive Farm to ECE program engages families and communities in meaningful ways.

Here is a look at some of the practices that will be identified throughout this guide.

## Instruction

- Promoting children's engagement
- Differentiating activities for all children
- Providing collaborative learning opportunities
- Connecting to the real world

## Classroom Culture

- Honoring children's experiences
- Practicing listening skills and building positive relationships
- Building trust in new experiences together
- Setting up child-centered environments
- Developing child-guided community agreements
- Providing meaningful roles and responsibilities for children

## Family and Community Engagement

- Inviting caregivers to share their cultures and traditions
- Incorporating family and community wisdom
- Connecting families together through events or projects
- Utilizing local resources
- Engaging in service projects in neighborhoods

**What other ways can you incorporate social and racial equity into your initiative?**



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## **Chapter 2: Exploring Gardening with Young Children**



# Introduction: Gardening with Children

Hands-on gardening activities are engaging, sensory learning experiences that show children where food comes from. These activities could include planting seeds on a windowsill, watering plants in an outdoor garden, or harvesting fruits and vegetables when ripe.

Gardening is always an experiment — sometimes it works better than others and that is part of the fun! Take time to ask questions, explore, and make discoveries about the natural world alongside the children.

**Research shows that gardening supports children's physical, social, and emotional development.**



### **Physical Development and Motor Skills**

Children develop both gross and fine motor skills through meaningful garden tasks. (GELDS: PDM5, PDM6)



### **Social and Emotional Development**

Children work cooperatively with others to complete large garden tasks. (SED4)



### **Approaches to Play and Learning**

Through exploring and asking questions, children build interest and curiosity about the natural world. (APL2)



### **Communication, Language and Literacy**

New vocabulary is developed through unique and meaningful real-world experiences. (CLL2)

**The garden provides a real world context for exploring math, science, social studies, and art ideas.**



### **Math**

Mathematic concepts of number, patterns, shape, and measurement have essential meaning in the natural world. (CD-MA1, CD-MA3, CD-MA4)



### **Science**

Children build knowledge related to the living things they share their environment with. (CD-SC3)



### **Social Studies**

Through growing food, children build a connection to their greater community. (CD-SS2)



### **Creative Development**

The natural world provides inspiration for exploring colors and visual art. (CD-CR2)

## **The following overview will get you started!**





Also, every county has a Cooperative Extension office - and they love helping schools! You can find your local extension office by going to: [extension.uga.edu/county-offices.html](http://extension.uga.edu/county-offices.html) OR [fvsu.edu/about-fort-valley-state-university/academics/college-of-agriculture-family-sciences-and-technology/outreachextension/](http://fvsu.edu/about-fort-valley-state-university/academics/college-of-agriculture-family-sciences-and-technology/outreachextension/)

# Growing an Indoor Garden



Growing indoors can be a fun and easy way to teach children about how plants grow!

Whether indoors or out, plants need four things to grow:

-  Soil
-  Water
-  Light
-  Air



**Here are some things you may need to grow indoors and give your plants everything they need:**

- Recycled containers with drainage holes (yogurt cups, tin cans, milk cartons, etc)
- Potting soil or compost
- Small cup or spray bottle to water plants
- Saucer to place under container to catch excess water
- A sunny windowsill

## Give it a try!

### Grow a Bean in a Bag

This method is great for watching seeds grow (or germinate). Seeds can grow in small bags for children to take home or large plastic zip bags for the classroom window.

**What to Plant** Lima beans (or other large seeds like spinach, squash, cantaloupe)

**Where to Plant** In a plastic zip bag with a folded, damp paper towel

#### How to Maintain



**Soil**  
No soil is needed for seeds to germinate.



**Water**  
Keep towel damp by spraying with water when needed.



**Light/Air**  
Hang the bag in a window with masking tape.

**Next** When the plants have outgrown the bag, they can be carefully planted in a larger container with the roots in soil and the stems and leaves stretching up.

### Grow Vegetables or Herbs in a Container Garden

Many vegetables and hardy herbs can be grown by seed in a container garden inside.

**What to Plant** Seeds for crops with shallow or short roots (such as lettuce, radishes, and spinach) or hardy herbs (such as basil or dill)

**Where to Plant** In containers with small holes so it will drain (yogurt cups, milk cartons, etc). Simply poke a few small holes in the bottom of a container

#### How to Maintain



**Soil**  
Plant the seed slightly under the surface of potting soil.



**Water**  
Water when the top of the soil feels dry (excess water will drain).



**Light/Air**  
Place on a sunny windowsill.

**Next** If the plants outgrow their container, they can be carefully planted in a larger container.



## Grow Peas on a Fork Trellis

Children love watching the tendrils of pea plants wrap around a trellis as the plant grows up!

**What to Plant** Pea seeds

**Where to Plant** In containers with drainage holes (yogurt cups, milk cartons, etc) and with a fork to serve as a trellis for the peas to grow up

### How to Maintain



**Soil**  
Plant the seed slightly under the surface of potting soil.



**Water**  
Water when the top of the soil feels dry, excess water will drain.



**Light/Air**  
Place on a sunny windowsill.

**Next** The shoots and pods of the pea plant are yummy to try!

## Sprout Sweet Potato Vines

While these are not edible, it is fun for children to see that some plants don't grow from seeds. These vines regenerate from other parts of the plant!

**What to Plant** Organic sweet potato with four toothpicks around the middle (note: organic sweet potatoes may be more likely to sprout. Some conventionally grown sweet potatoes have been sprayed to retard sprouting.)

**Where to Plant** In a clear cup of water, with the pointy end down in the water and the blunt end out of the water

### How to Maintain



**Soil**  
No soil is needed for the sweet potato to sprout.



**Water**  
Refill the water in the cup when necessary.



**Light/Air**  
Place on a sunny windowsill.

**Next** After one or two weeks, roots and vines will begin to grow.

# Outdoor Gardening: Where, When, and What to Plant



## Getting Started Gather Your Garden Team

Invite staff, parents, and community members to be a part of deciding where, when, and what to plant. It is valuable to gather input and ideas from the broader community. Also, different members of the community may be able to offer time, energy, money, or in-kind donations to planting and maintaining the garden.

## Deciding Where to Plant

**Find the perfect place for your garden!** Consider these three things:

### Available Sunlight:

It is important that the location of the garden receives as much sunlight as possible throughout the day — between six to eight hours ideally. On a sunny day, visit the garden a couple times throughout the day to see where the shade falls from trees and buildings. Any area that is not in the shade for most of the day would be a good one for the garden.

### Proximity to Water:

Consider where the nearest water source is — whether it is an outdoor spigot or hose or if the watering cans will come from inside.

### Accessibility:

The best location for a garden is a space that is easy for young children to walk to. Choose a spot that children, families and staff already walk by every day — even if it's small.

**Next:** Once the location is chosen, seeds can be planted directly in the ground or raised beds can be built up above the ground.



**Raised Beds**

Raised garden beds are built up above the ground using wood logs or cedar for the sides of the bed (not pressure treated lumber) and then the beds are filled with soil and compost. Many of the materials for a raised bed can be donated by a nursery center or hardware store.



**Pros:** Fewer weeds, easier to reach, defines garden space, keeps feet out of the garden



**Cons:** Needs consistent watering



**In-Ground Beds**

Seeds can also be planted directly in the ground once any grass or ground cover is raked away. In this case, it may be help to test the soil that you will be planting in. The local extension office can provide a soil testing kit and the results will explain what could be added to your soil from more nutrients, such as compost.



**Pros:** Affordable, requires less watering



**Cons:** More likely to grow weeds, may be stepped on without defined borders



**Container Gardens**

Gardens can be grown in containers big and small, including pots, wagons, an old sandbox, or gallon milk jugs. Plants will grow in just about any container that is deep enough and has drainage holes for excess water.



**Pros:** Advantages: affordable, uses containers you already have, allows for creativity



**Cons:** Needs consistent watering, remember to make holes for drainage

## Deciding When and What to Plant

There are many options of what can be grown in a garden. Here are some hardy favorites that are easy to maintain:

Herb, fruit, and berry gardens are perennial plants that come back year after year. The plants selected for the seasonal garden, on the other hand, will complete their life cycle within just a few months of either the warm or cool season.



### Herb Garden

An herb garden is perfect for young children because herbs have distinct smells, tastes, and textures. The herbs we chose below are hardy and prolific so many children can harvest from them. Additionally, we chose herbs that are perennial and require little maintenance.

**Favorites:** mint, rosemary, thyme, oregano, lavender, sage, chives

### Fruit or Berry Garden

Fruit and berry gardens give young children the opportunity to see a flower turn into a fruit protecting the seeds inside. They do not produce quite as much as other edible plants but they are fun to taste when they ripen! They also remain in the garden for years.

**Favorites:** strawberries, blueberries, fruit trees like figs and apples

### Flower Garden

Flower gardens are beautiful and attract birds and bees to the garden. Flowers of every color of the rainbow can be planted. Some flowers will grow taller than young children and some are even edible!

**Favorites:** nasturtiums (edible), sunflowers, butterfly bush

### Seasonal Garden

A seasonal garden is one that is planted and lasts only for the season, until the frost comes or until it gets too hot for the plants to survive. See some of our favorites below:

**Cool Weather Crops:**  
Plant in the fall or early spring

- Leafy greens (lettuce, kale, chard, spinach)
- Radishes
- Carrots
- Broccoli
- Sugar Snap Peas

### Warm Weather Crops:

Plant after last frost in mid-April

- Bell peppers
- Cucumbers
- Tomatoes
- Okra
- Cantaloupe
- Sweet Potato

Additionally, you can choose to plant either seeds or seedlings that have been started by a local farmer or nursery.



Seeds



Seedlings



**Pros:** Cheaper



**Cons:** Small to work with, lower germination rate, longer time to harvest



**Pros:** Greater success rate, shorter time to harvest



**Cons:** More expensive

**For more detailed information on what to plant and when,** use the Georgia Planting Calendar (see Appendix H). For ideas about theme gardens (such as a salsa garden), visit: <http://extension.uga.edu/programs-services/school-garden-resources/theme-gardens.html>

# How to Plant, Care, and Harvest with Young Children

Children learn responsibility when they care for a garden. There are many ways for young children to participate in the care of the garden. Most garden activities are easiest and most engaging when done in small groups of about five to six children at a time.



Here some examples of how children of different ages can help with garden tasks:

	ONE YEAR OLDS	TWO YEAR OLDS	THREE YEAR OLDS	FOUR YEAR OLDS	FIVE YEAR OLDS
<b>Planting</b>	Touch and feel variety of seeds	Sort seeds by size and shape	Plant large seeds where directed	Plant small seeds where directed	Plant small seeds by measuring or using a guide
<b>Adding Compost</b>	Touch and feel different types of soil	Use hands to spread soil in bed	Use hand rakes to spread soil in bed	Use trowels to move soil in bed	Use trowels and containers to move soil from one area to another
<b>Removing Weeds</b>	Explore root systems of weeds pulled	Pull weeds with help of teacher	Pull weeds marked with flour	Identify weeds by matching a picture	Assist with thinning beds
<b>Watering Plants</b>	Explore water through play	Count the rainy days	Pour water from a filled yogurt cup onto plant roots	Fill a yogurt cup with water, walk to the bed, pour onto plant roots	Fill a small watering can with water, walk to the bed, pour onto plant roots
<b>Harvesting Produce</b>	Touch and feel variety of harvested plant parts	Sort or order harvest by size or shape	Harvest produce identified by teacher	Identify produce to harvest by matching a picture	Independently harvest a certain number of ripe produce
<b>Washing Produce</b>	Explore water through play	Gently pat dry washed produce	Gently wash produce in running water and pat dry	Scrub root vegetables with an unused toothbrush	Wash leafy green vegetables in a salad spinner

## Planting with Children

Young children can participate in planting seeds and seedlings. Here are some tips:

### Mark Your Space

Children work best with their own personal space. Give each child their own spot along the perimeter of the garden bed.

### Mark the Spots

There are many ways to mark where the seeds or seedlings should be planted, such as placing a spot of baking flour on top of the soil. Also, a “guide” can be made out of cardstock with holes punched at intervals so children can drop seeds through the holes.

### No Tools Necessary

The holes for most seeds and seedlings will not be deep enough to need trowels. Children can simply use one finger to make a tiny hole that is either as deep as the seed is high or as deep as the root ball is long.



### Harvesting

With some care and patience, the garden will be ready to harvest!

**Young children** can participate by using both hands to gently harvest the vegetables that are ripe and ready.

**Teachers** can show them how to gently harvest and then they can try!



### Washing

Produce will need a little water and scrubbing to get the dirt off.

**Young children** can participate by washing vegetables gently with their hands in running water and then patting them dry with a paper towel. Root vegetables can also be scrubbed with an unused toothbrush and leafy green vegetables can be washed in a salad spinner.



## Maintenance Tasks with Children

### Adding Compost and Soil

Compost is organic matter that is rich in nutrients for plants. It is beneficial to add to garden beds at the beginning of the season.

**Young children** can participate by using child-size digging tools and containers to move soil from one area to another and then use their hands to spread the soil in the garden bed.

### Removing Weeds

It can be challenging to identify weeds (or unwanted plants) from the garden. When you find out which plants are weeds, they should be removed to allow space for the surrounding plants to thrive.

**Young children** can participate by pulling up the roots of the plants. **Adults** can help by sprinkling baking flour on the weeds so they are easy to find for children.

### Watering

There are many ways to water a garden — like waiting for rainfall, hand-watering, setting up a sprinkler attached to a hose, or installing a drip irrigation system.

**Young children** can participate by checking how damp the soil feels to decide if the garden needs water. Then, children can use small watering cans (or other containers like yogurt cups) to carry water from the source to the garden and carefully pour water on the soil near the plants roots.

This method of watering one small cup at a time is not the most efficient but children enjoy the practice with their gross and fine motor skills.

# Simple Outdoor Gardening Activities by GELDS Domain



Outdoor activities are designed to build curiosity and encourage exploration. These activities help children make discoveries about the world around them. By spending time outside, children can experience the seasons as they change. They observe the effect that the changing weather has on all of the living things - the plants that grow, the animals that help them, and humans that eat them too!

## Give it a try!

### Outdoor Observation



**Gather** — Sit or stand with all students in a circle in an open place outdoors.

**Ask** — “What is the same and what is different from our last visit to this space?”

**Observe** — Give children a few silent seconds to just listen and look to the world around them.

**Share** — Provide time for children to share what they observed.

**Activities that can be done outside in a garden area with minimal materials or planning. See Appendix B for more information on aligning with the GELDS.**

	ONE AND TWO YEAR OLDS	THREE YEAR OLDS	FOUR YEAR OLDS	FIVE YEAR OLDS
<b>Mathematic Cognitive Development</b>	Use size words to describe things found in the garden	Find objects of different shapes in the garden	Count the number of worms found in the garden	Sort fallen leaves by color, shape, or size
<b>Science Cognitive Development</b>	Observe and explore with the senses (sight, touch, smell), and show curiosity about the garden	Use a magnifying glass to look closer at things in the garden	Record observations of plants and animals through drawings and dictation	Explore water, soil, sand, and mud and build understanding of what plants need
<b>Communication, Language Literacy</b>	Listen to and follow simple directions for garden tasks	Ask and answer questions about what is observed in the garden	Describe garden activities using expanded sentences and details	Build vocabulary through activities, books, and conversations about the garden
<b>Creative Development</b>	Listen to rhymes, finger plays, songs, and stories about the garden	Describe what colors are seen in the garden through the different seasons	Do a yoga sequence to show how plants grow	Use crayons to draw lines/shapes and watercolors to fill in color of plants in the garden
<b>Physical Development and Motor Skills</b>	Develop balance and coordination bending and standing to/from the garden bed	Use tools like trowels to determine their purpose	Use fingers to sort seeds by color, shape, and size	Practice safety rules around the garden





## Tips for Behavior Management in the Outdoor Garden

Young children love exploring outside! You may need to help refocus children's attention, energy level, and volume level from what they are accustomed to on the playground to an energy level that is more appropriate for an outdoor classroom where plants are growing, animals are living, and children are learning.

Here are some tips to help children make decisions that are best for the growing and learning environment outdoors:

### Dividing into Small Groups

All tasks are easier to accomplish and more engaging for children when they are completed in small groups of five to six children. See more in "How to Plant, Care, and Harvest with Young Children" on page 23.

### Naming the Space

Name the outdoor garden space something that reminds children that it is different than the playground space. Names could be the Garden, the Outdoor Classroom, the Living Laboratory, etc.

### Gathering Together

It is important to have a gathering space near the garden so children know exactly where to go when they arrive in the space and exactly where to go when they are called back to the space. Ideally, it is an area where students can sit or stand in a circle and see each other.

### Starting with a Quiet Activity

To set the tone, ask children to sit in a circle and listen quietly for garden sounds (one minute for every year old is about how long children can sit quietly). How many sounds can they hear? Hold a finger up for every new sound they hear.

### Setting Boundaries

If there is a not fence around the garden area where children can explore, be sure to show children exactly what the boundaries are before they leave the whole group to explore on their own or in small groups.

### Modeling Safety

Always ensure adult supervision and model tasks for children, particularly when tools are being used.

### Practicing a "Call Back"

Decide on a fun call and response for the garden. Then when children hear the teacher make the call, they'll know to come right back to the circle.

# Tips for Safety in the Outdoor Garden

Young children should always be closely supervised in the garden. Here are some tips to help keep children safe while they are exploring outdoors:

## Washing Hands

Because the garden is growing food that we will eat -- children should wash hands **before and after** visiting the garden. If possible, set up an outdoor washing station to make handwashing easy.

### Wet and Lather

Wet hands using warm running water.  
Lather soap up to elbows.

### Rub and Scrub

Rub and scrub for 20 seconds on the backs of hands, wrists, between fingers, and under fingernails.

### Rinse and Dry

Rinse under warm running water. Dry with paper towels. Turn off running water with a paper towel, not bare hands.

## Reviewing Allergies

Review all known allergies with the school nurse and parents and prepare a school protocol in case of emergencies. Also, be alert to any signs of allergic reactions. This will be further discussed in “Tasting with Young Children.”

## Avoiding Stinging Insects

Practice identifying bees and other stinging insects with children. Be aware of their favorite habitats and ways to avoid them as well.

## Using Water

Make sure you have a potable (safe to drink) water source to irrigate your edible garden.

[For more information on how to test your water see www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/lead-drinking-water-schools-and-childcare-facilities](http://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/lead-drinking-water-schools-and-childcare-facilities)

## Avoiding Chemicals

We recommend gardening with organic methods. Be aware of what is in your potting soil, fertilizers, pest control, and weed control. If you do use chemicals, keep them out of reach of children at all times. Even organic chemicals and fertilizers can harm children if consumed.



## Using Tools

Even young children can use small hand tools with appropriate supervision. Slowly introduce each new hand tool to children with the steps below.

**Note:** Many garden tasks do not require tools.

### Divide into Small Groups

Small groups of five or six children are ideal for hands-on activities, particularly when the tasks involve using tools such as trowels.

### Mark Your Space

It is important for children to know their boundaries for their bodies and for their tool, including where to place their tool when it is at rest.

### Model the Task

With children's attention focused on the teacher, model the task that children will complete independently. Remind students that tools are designed for specific tasks and they are not to be used as toys.

### Supervise Closely

Tools should be used with direct supervision of an adult at all times.

### Store Appropriately

When tools are not in use, they should be stored out of reach of children.

When long-handled tools or power tools are necessary, they should be used when children are not nearby.

## Eating Garden Produce

Teach children to never eat any plants without permission from an adult. Additionally, be careful to ensure that children do not eat soil or any other natural elements from the garden.

[For information on poisonous plants see Appendix G.](#)



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## **Chapter 3: Exploring Cooking and Tasting with Young Children**

# Introduction: Cooking and Tasting with Children

Hands-on cooking activities are engaging, sensory learning experiences that motivate young children to try new foods. These activities could include washing produce, preparing produce (like tearing leafy greens or using other manual tools without blades), measuring ingredients, or mixing ingredients for dressings. Children can also participate in arranging and serving foods before taste testing.

Tasting new foods can be exciting and sometimes challenging! Take time for children to be a part of the preparation, to ask questions, to explore, and they'll be ready for new tastes!

**Research shows that cooking with young children supports their physical, social, and emotional development.**



### **Physical Development and Motor Skills**

Children develop both gross and fine motor skills through meaningful cooking tasks.



### **Social and Emotional Development**

Children work cooperatively with others to complete multiple steps.



### **Approaches to Play and Learning**

Through exploring and asking questions, children build interest and curiosity about the food they eat.



### **Communication, Language and Literacy**

New vocabulary is developed through unique and meaningful real-world experiences.

**The kitchen classroom provides a real-world context for exploring math, science, social studies, and art ideas.**



### **Math**

Mathematic concepts of number and measurement have essential meaning while cooking.



### **Science**

Children build knowledge related to motion and matter.



### **Social Studies**

Through cooking, children build a connection to their greater community.



### **Creative Development**

The preparing and sharing of food is a familiar story for dramatic play.

## **The following overview will get you started!**

Finally, safety is the most important thing to consider with young children. Please review the "Tips for Safety while Cooking and Tasting" before getting started.

# Hands-on Cooking for Young Children

“Cooking” with young children is often focused on the preparation of raw, seasonal fruits or vegetables. Children can wash produce, make bite-sized pieces, combine ingredients, and arrange the dish to be served. The snacks could be salads, skewers, boats, or roll-ups. Children can also participate in measuring and mixing ingredients for a dip or dressing.

## Cooking tasks for young children include:

ZERO TO ONE YEAR OLDS	TWO YEAR OLDS	THREE YEAR OLDS	FOUR AND FIVE YEAR OLDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe, engage, and connect with adults and older children as they prepare foods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry vegetables</li> <li>Gently wash leafy vegetables</li> <li>Tear leafy greens</li> <li>Arrange vegetables on dish</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scrub root vegetables with brush</li> <li>Pour liquids</li> <li>Use a whisk to stir liquids</li> <li>Shake a closed jar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Squeeze citrus</li> <li>Slice herbs with scissors</li> <li>Measure liquids</li> <li>Serve food</li> </ul>

## What will we need?

For basic recipes with young children, like the ones provided on the next page, not many tools are needed. Here is an example list to get started:

### For washing:

- Colander
- Unused toothbrushes

### For cutting:

- Cutting boards
- Scissors
- Nylon knife (for teacher)

### For dressings:

- Measuring cups
- Measuring spoons
- Jar with lid
- Whisk
- Blender

### For serving:

- Platter
- Napkin

## What will we cook?

Start with what is seasonal! Seasonal produce is less expensive and when it’s purchased from local farms, it is as fresh as possible — making it taste better and more nutritious.

### Cool Weather Crops:

- Leafy greens
- Radishes
- Carrots
- Broccoli
- Turnips

### Warm Weather Crops:

- Tomatoes
- Bell peppers
- Cucumbers
- Okra
- Corn



## How will we cook?

### Explore the Ingredients

- How would you describe what this vegetable looks like to someone that has never seen it before? What color is it? What does it feel like? What does it smell like?
- Where do you think the food came from? How did it grow? What did it need to grow? Who grew it? How did it get to our school?
- Do you think you’ve ever seen this vegetable before? Here at school, in the garden, at home, at a grocery store, at a restaurant? What does it remind you of?

### Cook Step-by-Step

- Watch the teacher show you the task.
- Practice the task while your teacher helps.
- Finish all by yourself!

# Recipes for Young Children

Children in early care can participate in the preparation of many snacks - particularly those that involve washing, preparing, arranging raw produce and making a dip or dressing.

## Easy Recipes for Young Children

Here are some examples for easy recipes that feature local foods. See notes to incorporate these recipes into your CACFP meal pattern.

### Minty Melon Salad

**Prep Time:** 10 minutes

**Yield:** 6 cups

**Ingredients:**

- 1 tablespoon honey\*
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 6 cups cut melon cubes (watermelon, honey dew, cantelope)
- ¼ cup chopped fresh mint

**Directions:**

Stir honey and lemon juice together in a large bowl. Add melon and mint and stir to coat.

**CACFP Crediting Information:** Serve ½ cup of Minty Melon Salad with 1 oz of Brown Rice Crackers

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### Tomato Basil Corn Salad

**Prep Time:** 10 minutes

**Yield:** 3-4 cups of salad

**Ingredients:**

- 6 ears of corn, shucked
- 3 large tomatoes diced (or 1 pint grape tomatoes, cut in half)
- 1/2 cup small-diced red onion (or 1 small onion)
- 3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup julienned fresh basil leaves

**Directions:**

Cut the kernels off the cob, cutting close to the cob. Toss the kernels in a large bowl with the red onions, vinegar, olive oil, salt, and pepper. Just before serving, toss in the fresh basil. Allow to marinate for 20 minutes for the best flavor. Can be made and refrigerated overnight.

**CACFP Crediting Information:** Serve ½ cup of Tomato Basil Corn Salad with ½ oz of Mozzarella cheese



Here are some general ideas - be creative!

### Dips and Dippers

Children can help with mixing a dip or dressing and may be able to cut the veggie dippers or break bread into dipping-sized pieces.

### Salads

Children can help with mixing a dressing and assist with tearing leafy greens for a salad. They may be able to cut the other veggies into bite-sized pieces as well. Salads can be themed with ingredients that represent every color of the rainbow or every part of the plant.

### Boats

Instead of eating veggies and a dressing from a bowl, it can be eaten from an edible "boat" like a halved bell pepper or a halved and hollowed out cucumber or summer squash.

### Wraps and Roll-ups

Veggies and dressing can also be folded or rolled up into a lettuce leaf or tortilla like a taco or burrito.

### Skewers

Add different fruits to make a pattern.

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\*Honey should not be served to children under the age of one.

## Kale with Raspberry Vinaigrette

**Prep Time:** 15 minutes

**Yield:** 6 cups of salad

### Ingredients:

2 tablespoons raspberry jam  
1/4 cup rice vinegar or apple cider vinegar  
1/3 cup olive oil  
Salt and black pepper to taste  
2 large bunches of kale, stemmed and torn

### Directions:

1. Vigorously whisk together the raspberry jam, vinegar, and olive oil until thoroughly combined; season with salt and black pepper.
2. Rinse torn stem in a colander under running water. Pat kale dry with paper towels and transfer to a large mixing bowl.
3. Pour raspberry vinaigrette over kale, and with clean hands, massage the vinaigrette into the kale until the kale turns a deep green color (2-3 minutes).

### CACFP Crediting Information for three to five

**year olds (snack):** 1/2 cup of kale salad + 1/2 ounce equivalent of Whole Grain crackers equals one vegetable and one grain.



## Fruit Dippers with Honey Yogurt

**Prep Time:** 10 minutes

**Yield:** 2 cups of dip

### Ingredients:

2 cups vanilla yogurt  
1/2 cup honey\*  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
Assorted fresh fruit (such as apples, bananas, pineapple and/or strawberries), cut into wedges or bite-size pieces

### Directions:

Combine yogurt, honey and cinnamon in small bowl; stir to blend.

### CACFP Crediting Information for three to five

**year olds (snack):** 1/2 ounce yogurt + 1/2 cup of fruit equals one meat/meat alternate and one fruit.

## Veggie Wrap

**Prep Time:** 10 minutes

**Yield:** 10

### Ingredients

2 large size avocados, pit removed  
2 teaspoons fresh lime juice  
Dash garlic powder  
Salt and pepper to taste  
1 pint grape tomatoes, cut in half  
2 cups shredded carrots  
10 oz baby spinach  
10 taco sized whole wheat tortillas

### Directions:

1. Scoop the flesh of the avocados from the skin using a spoon and place into a mixing bowl. Add lime juice, garlic powder, salt and pepper and smash the avocados with a fork until a paste is formed.
2. Arrange tortillas on a cutting board or plate and spread 1 tablespoon of avocado mixture on half of each tortilla. Top with remaining vegetables and roll up to enjoy!

### CACFP Crediting Information for three

**to five year olds (snack):** One veggie wrap = one vegetable and one grain.

## Cucumber Hummus Boats

**Prep Time:** 10 minutes

**Yield:** 24-30 3" boats

### Ingredients:

2 10-oz containers of prepared hummus  
6-10 cucumbers, sliced in half lengthwise, seeds scooped out with a spoon  
2 pints grape or cherry tomatoes, cut in half or quartered

### Directions:

Fill empty cucumber boats with hummus. Top with cut tomatoes. Cut cucumbers into 3-4" pieces per serving.

### CACFP Crediting Information for three to five year

**olds (snack):** 1/2 cup of cucumber + 1/2 ounce of hummus\*\* = one vegetable and one meat/meat alternate

\*Honey should not be served to children under the age of one.

\*\*Commercially prepared hummus must have a Child Nutrition label or Product Formulation Statement that specifies how to credit the hummus toward the meat/meat alternate and/or fruit/vegetable component(s) based on the serving size.

# Tasting with Young Children

Tasting new foods can be exciting and sometimes challenging! To excite children around tasting new foods, involve them in as many steps as possible - from choosing what to taste (maybe something they have been growing in the garden!) to participating in preparing the dish and deciding how to serve it. The pressure of trying something new can also be relieved by offering only a sample size and celebrating the courage it took to take even the smallest bite.

Taste tests are intended to encourage adventurous eaters that grow to love the taste and texture of healthy, seasonal fruits and vegetables. They are simply an introduction to foods the children may see again soon at lunchtime, growing in the garden, or on the grocery store shelves so students can build familiarity and meaningful experiences with those foods.

## How will we taste?

After the tools and tables are cleaned up and after the snack is served with all children seated, it is time to taste!

It is often preferred to lead children in tasting all together on the count of three. This gives each child the chance to taste quietly and form their own opinions before sharing them. Then, here are some steps to leading children to share what they tasted:

## Share Describing Words

### How would you describe the fruit or vegetable?

- Sweet, spicy, sour, bitter?
- Crunchy, soft, juicy, gooey?

## Share Opinions

### What did you think of the fruit or vegetable?

- "I love it!"
- "Delicious."
- "Interesting."
- "It's not my favorite."
- "I don't like it yet."
- "I may try again another time."

## Collect Data

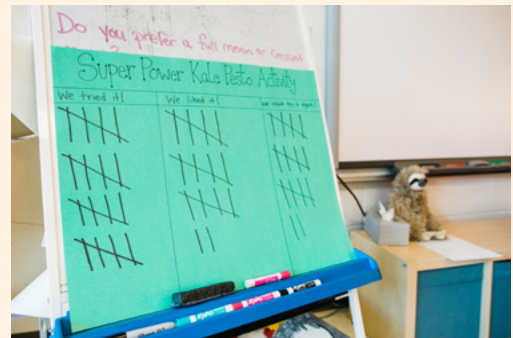
### Would you try this fruit or vegetable again?

- Yes, Maybe, No



Following a taste test, data can be collected by raising hands, making a sticker chart, or drawing a bar graph or pictograph.

Beyond building knowledge of numbers and quantity in children, it is valuable feedback for the teacher, staff, and parents on the children's current taste preferences.







## Tips for Behavior Management while Cooking and Tasting

Young children love working with food and tools! For many children it is empowering to choose and prepare their own foods. With the high levels of excitement, it may be necessary to monitor and refocus children's attention and energy level. Here are some tips to help children make decisions that are best for the cooking and tasting environment:

### **Naming the Space**

When food and cooking tools are present, the classroom space or the class time can be named something that reminds children of the shift in expectations, such as the Kitchen Classroom or Tasting Time.

### **Gathering Together**

It is important to have a gathering space near a demonstration table where, when requested, children can sit comfortably to watch and listen to instructions.

### **Dividing into Small Groups**

Hands-on tasks are easier, safer, and more engaging for children when they are completed in small groups of five to six children. Consider other independent tasks small groups of children can be involved in while one group is engaged in a hands-on activity with the teacher. Activities may include reading books about food, drawing a picture of their favorite food, or sorting foods by attributes.

### **Start with a book!**

Consider reading about growing and cooking food before or after each hands-on food experience. See Appendix E for a list of favorite children's books.

# Tips for Safety while Cooking and Tasting

It is important for young children to be closely supervised while engaged with tools and while eating. Here are some tips to help keep children safe while they are cooking and tasting:

## Preparing to Cook

### Wash Hands

#### Wet and Lather

Wet hands using warm running water.  
Lather soap up to elbows.

#### Rub and Scrub

Rub and scrub for 20 seconds on the backs of hands, wrists, between fingers, and under fingernails.

#### Rinse and Dry

Rinse under warm running water. Dry with paper towels. Turn off running water with a paper towel, not bare hands.

### Clean Space and Tools

Clean, rinse, sanitize all surfaces used for food prep and eating, including the sink.

Clean, rinse, and sanitize all tools and utensils used for food prep and eating.

### Wash Veggies

#### Wet

Wet vegetables with cold running water.

#### Rub or Scrub

Rub delicate vegetables gently or scrub root vegetables with a brush.

#### Dry

Pat vegetables dry.

## Storing Food

Follow proper food safety storage guidelines for any food that is stored for any amount of time before serving or food that is leftover after serving.

## Cooking

### Avoid Allergens

- Review all known allergies with the school nurse and parents.
- Prepare a school protocol in case of emergencies.
- Be alert for allergic reactions including tingling or itching in mouth or slight swelling of lips or tongue.

### Supervise Tool Use

Many cooking tasks for young children do not require tools but children can use small hand tools with appropriate supervision. Introduce each new hand tool to children slowly with the steps below. When heat or blades are necessary, they should not be used when children are nearby.

#### Divide into Small Groups

Small groups of five to six children are ideal for hands-on activities, particularly when the tasks involve using tools.

#### Mark Your Space

It is important for children to know boundaries for their bodies and for their tool, including where to place their tool when it is at rest. Ideally each child would be sitting in their own chair and have a cutting mat to work on.

#### Model the Task

With children's attention focused on the teacher, model the task that children will complete independently. Remind students that tools are designed for specific tasks and they are not to be used as toys.

#### Supervise Closely

Tools should be used with direct supervision of an adult at all times.

#### Store Appropriately

When tools are not in use, they should be stored out of reach of children.

## Tasting

### Eliminate choking hazards

#### Sit to Taste

Eating while seated prevents choking.

#### Try Small Bites

Each bite should be small enough for small mouths but large enough to encourage chewing to prevent choking.



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## Chapter 4: Procuring Local Food for the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Buying local food can be a rewarding experience for your staff, students and families. By purchasing local food you are keeping dollars circulating in your community. In addition, Georgia grows food year-round, and there are many options for buying fresh produce, dairy, grains, meat, eggs, and beans.

If your center participates in the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), you are allowed to purchase local food. However, there are a few guidelines that you will need to follow.

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and Georgia Organics created the document, ***Local Food for Little Eaters in Georgia***. This document covers important information such as:

- Capitalizing on CACFP to Support Local Food Purchasing
- Meeting CACFP Meal Patterns and Best Practices with Local Food Purchasing
- Supporting Culturally Relevant Programming through Local Food Purchasing
- CACFP Local Food Purchasing Procedures
- Purchasing Local Food from Broadline Distributors
- Purchasing Local Food from Food Hubs
- Purchasing Local Food from Farmers and Farmer Cooperatives
- Purchasing Local Food from Farmers Markets
- Tips for Local Food Purchasing Success

You can find this document at

<https://farmtoschool.georgiaorganics.org/>

# Meeting CACFP Meal Patterns and Best Practices With Local Food Purchasing



Local food purchasing initiatives can be a tool for meeting CACFP meal pattern requirements. The CACFP meal pattern, which was updated in 2016 and implemented in 2017, sets standards for meals served by programs that receive funding. Many of these standards support increased fruit and vegetable consumption, and meeting these standards can be aided by purchasing local food.

The new CACFP meal pattern standards include several best practices related to fruits and vegetables that could be met through local purchasing. Although only one best practice explicitly mentions local food, others can be easily met by participation in Farm to ECE.

## CACFP Best Practices Relevant to Local Food Purchasing



**Incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals.**

The USDA understands that the incorporation of local food into CACFP can play an important role in creating a healthy environment. Because of this, purchasing local foods is a best practice in the CACFP meal patterns; it is seen as a strategy to better meet CACFP standards and improve program quality.



**Make at least one of the two required components of snacks a vegetable or fruit.**

This best practice emphasizes increasing the number of eating experiences in a day in which children are exposed to fruits and vegetables. Local food purchasing provides access to fresher and more varied fruits and vegetables that can help providers increase the amount of fruits and vegetables they serve.



**Serve a variety of fruits and choose whole fruits more often than juice.**

Purchasing locally can increase access to a wider variety of fruits and vegetables. Additionally, fruits purchased seasonally and locally often come in a greater variety of colors.



**Provide at least one serving each of dark green vegetables, red and orange vegetables, beans and peas, starchy vegetables, and other vegetables once per week.**

Purchasing local food can increase access to a wider variety of fruits and vegetables of different colors. ECE program staff can work directly with local growers to plant different varieties or colors of common produce, such as purple cauliflower, yellow carrots, or a wider variety of dark leafy greens.

## Micro-purchasing

The micro-purchase threshold is a simpler way to purchase small quantities of local food. Your program can simply find a vendor and purchase its product without getting competitive price quotes. You should still keep receipts and/or document these micro-purchases.

Micro-purchasing was designed to make it easy for CACFP sites to try out new purchases or a new vendor relationship. For example, a program can use the micro-purchase method to purchase seasonal produce from a farmers market or support a special event. If an ECE program plans to regularly purchase local food from the same vendor, it should use the small purchase method.

Also, micro-purchases should be distributed equitably among qualified suppliers. For example:

- A center is using micro-purchasing to buy strawberries from a local farmer. If the center would like to buy strawberries locally again, it should check to see if there are any other local strawberry farmers in the area before selecting the same farmer to purchase from again. If there are multiple local strawberry farmers in the area, the center should receive quotes to compare prices.

## Informal Procurement (Small Purchase)

For food costs that fall under the \$250,000 small purchase threshold, ECE programs may use simple, informal methods to ensure that their vendors' prices are competitive. To use the informal purchasing method, follow these steps:

1. Write specifications for all items. Local is not allowed to be used as a specification; however, programs can include other specifications that are characteristics of local food, such as the following:
  - Vendor is able to deliver products.
  - Vendor is able to provide location of origin for all products.
  - Vendor is available for farm tours or educational visits to the center.
  - Freshness requirements for product.
2. Record the date, vendors, and quotes received for a minimum of three names. Quotes can be obtained verbally but need to be documented in writing using the Small Purchase Documentation Form in the Local Food for Little Eaters Guide.
3. Prepare a documentation sheet that indicates the awarded vendor using the Agreement to Furnish Foods for the Child and Adult Care Food Program in the Local Food for Little Eaters Guide.

With this method, program staff can choose the vendors from which they get prices. Program staff can compare from local vendors and then purchase from the lowest priced vendor.



## Utilizing Micro-Purchases

**Georgia October Farm to School Month** celebrates a signature Georgia food every year like kale, legumes, or carrots. If a program chooses to highlight the Georgia food once during the month, program staff can use the micro-purchase method for local produce if the total cost is less than \$10,000. It must be a one-time event not typically included in the program's planned food purchases.

**A to Z Building Blocks** in American Fork, UT, uses the micro-purchase threshold to purchase occasional small quantities of cantaloupe, watermelon, and other fruits from local farm stands based on seasonal availability. Because the center's purchases are under \$10,000, they are able to use the micro-purchase method.

## Utilizing Informal Procurement

**Baxter's Child Development Center** in Grand Rapids, MI, uses the small purchase threshold to order local fruits and vegetables from a regional food hub. The center documents prices for five frequently purchased products and provides prices from the three vendors of its choice, including the food hub. The center also considers the following:

- The vendor's distance from the center and availability to deliver
- The ability to source all of its needed produce
- A stated priority to support small and minority-owned businesses whenever possible

# Allowable Uses of CACFP Funds for Farm to Early Care and Education Related Activities

The following clarifications explore the allowable and unallowable use of CACFP award funds, which is consistent with Team Nutrition grants. See Appendix I and J for additional guidance and a list of items that are considered allowable costs under CACFP or contact Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning's Nutrition Division.

## Food Cost

CACFP Child Care Wellness funds may be used to pay for food if the food is part of a specific educational activity. For example, conducting a child care taste test of specific fruits or vegetables or demonstrating the making of simple, healthy snacks is a reasonable request. The use of the food must be related to nutrition education activities. CACFP Child Care Wellness funds should not be used to purchase meals or snacks, improve reimbursable meal components, or subsidize the reimbursement rates.

## Food and Nutrition Equipment

CACFP Child Care Wellness funds may not be used to purchase food service operation equipment, such as salad bar equipment, refrigerators, food processors, etc. However, small mobile kitchen equipment to be used for food preparation demonstration or hands-on food experiences may be permissible if such activities are part of the integrated nutrition education lessons.



### **Gardening is an excellent way to involve the children, parents and the community in nutrition-related activities.**

If proposals submitted specify a gardening activity, CACFP Child Care Wellness funds **may be used to purchase a reasonable amount of supplies** (e.g., seeds, potting soil and starter pots) for gardening projects or even a few shovels and hoes for a larger gardening project. Funds may not be used to purchase bulk supplies such as topsoil, irrigation supplies, fencing or any type of large equipment such as a tiller or greenhouse.

Source: Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): Allowable Use of Grant Funds  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/allowable-use-grant-funds>

# Tips to Promote Local Food

Buying local food is a great way to get fresh, delicious food into your snacks and meals and support your local farmers. But don't stop there! Make sure to tell the world (especially your staff, parents, and students) all about these new ingredients.

Here are some of our favorite ways to promote local food:

## Meet the Farmer!

Children treat local farmers like celebrities! Ask farmers to talk to students about their farm and show the children photos. If the farmer is unable to visit the school, ask if the farmer can FaceTime, Skype, or send a video for the children to watch! You can even ask children to draw pictures for the farmer to thank them for the food they grew. If your program takes field trips, consider visiting a local farm if it is appropriate.

Many children don't actually know what real farmers look like, so showing them photos of farmers of different ages, racial backgrounds and genders is a great opportunity for children to explore who is growing their food!

## Promoting Harvest of the Month!

Once a month, you can feature one new product from a different farmer. This will help teach the children, parents and staff about your initiative and they will get excited to learn about the new farmer and item every month. We've seen some schools ask kids to wear green for Broccoli day or a director dress up like a carrot! Quality Care for Children has a great Harvest of the Month Calendar available online.



## Show photos!

Include a photo of a farmer on days that their produce is being served! When serving the food, remember to help children remember the connection- Farmer Susan grew these peas for you!



## Mark "Local Food Day" on your meal calendar!

Even if you are only serving one local item every month, you can get children excited by including it on your meal calendar with a special icon. Some early care programs will even include a photo of the farmer on the meal calendar or fun facts about the local produce.

## Explore with taste tests!

If you plan to serve sweet potatoes for the first time, make sure the children have a chance to learn about sweet potatoes at least a week beforehand. Take a raw sweet potato and pass it around for them to touch. Perhaps give them a small taste or show them a video of how it is grown.



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## **Chapter 5: Engaging Families, Staff and Community**



# Strategies for Family Engagement

Engaging families in a meaningful way can start by sharing with them what the children are experiencing at the center and ideas for how it can be supported at home. Then, create multiple ways for families to get involved by asking questions and inviting families to participate.

## Ask and Listen

Every family has experience with food and has something to share.

### Here are some questions to start the conversation:

- What food memories are special to your family?
- What experience, knowledge, or skills could you share?
- What would you like to see planted in the garden this season?
- What is your opinion on these upcoming plans and how would you like to be involved?

## Invite

Invite families to participate.

### Invite families to join you at school for a...

- Mystery reader in the garden (during the school day)
- Garden tours for families (on evenings or weekends)
- Garden workdays — seasonal events or regular maintenance groups like “Wednesday Weeders and Waterers”
- Cooking or tasting activities
- Garden and harvest parties

### Invite families to meet you in the community for a...

- Farmers market visit
- Community garden visit
- Farm visit

#### Best Practice:

It's important to offer different types of opportunities at different times of the day and week. This will help meet the needs of families' schedules.

## Share

### What to Share

Share photos and messages about what the children are experiencing in school and how it can be supported outside of school.

- *What* was planted or tasted in meals- share photos.
- *How* to try it at home - send recipe cards home with simple instructions, accessible ingredients, and where to find the ingredients at the farmers market.
- *Why* it is a valuable experience - explain how trying new things, nourishing our bodies, supporting our farmers, and caring for our Earth are experienced in your program.



### How to Share

Consider all of the ways your center is currently connecting with families and how photos and messages can be included in those.

- **In Person** — school marquis in front of the center, front desk, bulletin boards inside the center
- **Print** — menus, newsletters, flyers in take home folders, bulletin boards, information at front desk
- **Online** — social media accounts, email newsletters, websites, text trees

## Show Appreciation and Celebrate!

Don't forget to say thank you! When parents arrive to volunteer, consider offering snacks and water. Give shout outs to parent volunteers in newsletters and display photos of parent volunteers in the classroom. Send home thank you cards. Finally, make time to celebrate even the smallest victories - the fall garden harvest, an adventurous taste test, or October Farm to School Month!

# Strategies for Staff Engagement

Getting your staff excited about Farm to ECE activities is one of the most important steps for sustaining your work! Take time to listen to staff members about their ideas and focus on starting with easy activities where they will see success. While you can always begin a Farm to ECE initiative with one person, your program will be much stronger, more sustainable and more fun with at least four to seven core staff members who are leading and participating in activities.

## Offer Ways to Participate

There are many different ways to start participating in Farm to ECE programs and each staff member may have a different interest or capacity to try a new project. Offering many different ways to get involved ensures that everyone can find something that excites them. Here are some examples:

- Read a book about the life cycle of an apple tree
- Sing a song about the changing seasons
- Collect and sort different fallen leaves
- Journal or draw what you find outside
- Taste test strawberries in the spring
- Plant a bed in the garden in the fall



**Also, ask questions of the staff so all voices are heard before making decisions.**

- Why are you interested in this? What are you excited about?
- What about this makes you nervous?
- What help do you need?
- What experience, knowledge, or skills could you share?
- What would you like to see planted in the garden this season?
- What would you like to taste test with your class this season?
- What is your opinion on these upcoming plans?

## Offer Ways to Learn

Provide a variety of ways for teachers to learn and build skills together through access to relevant information and resources.

### Teamwork

When possible, create time for teachers to plan and reflect together on what has worked and what might work in the future.

### Peer-to-Peer Learning

Teachers can share photos or demo quick Farm to ECE activities or taste tests for staff during staff meetings.

### Professional Development Opportunities

Explore the professional development opportunities in your area and consider sending staff for hands-on training.

### Resources

Provide selected relevant resources for teachers to access exactly what will work for the age level they teach and the materials they have available.

## Celebrate Success

Don't forget that even the smallest achievements deserve attention and celebration!

### What to Share

Share photos and messages about what the children are experiencing with their teacher.

### How to Share

Consider all of the ways your center is currently communicating with their staff, families, and broader community.

- **In Person** — school marquis in front of the center, bulletin boards inside the center
- **Print** — newsletters, flyers in take home folders
- **Online** — Social media accounts, email newsletters, websites, text trees

# Strategies for Community Engagement

Non-profit organizations, local businesses, the extension service, and Master Gardeners have a lot to offer local Farm to ECE programs. Share with them what is happening at your center, invite them to come see it in action, and give them opportunities to help!

## Share What's Working

### What to Share

Share photos and messages about what the children are experiencing at their school.

### How to Share

Consider sharing directly with individual organizations but also with the broader community when it's possible.

- **In Person** — community bulletin boards
- **Print/TV/Radio** — local newspapers, magazines, radio segments, news segments
- **Online** — neighborhood groups (Facebook groups, NextDoor, Yahoo Groups), social media accounts (using hashtags, locations, or mentions), email newsletters, websites

## Invite to the Garden

Invite community members to join you for different events...

- Mystery reader in the garden (during the school day)
- Garden tours (during the workday, evenings, or on weekends)
- Garden workdays - seasonal events or regular maintenance groups like "Wednesday Weeders and Waterers"



## Ask for Help

Individual community members and local organizations can contribute in different ways. Here are some different things you can ask your community for:

**Expertise** — Organizations like the Master Gardeners or individuals like local chefs are experts and can help answer any questions that you have or come be a guest teacher for the class.

**Energy** — Volunteer groups like the high school Beta Club or even volunteers from a local gym may be interested in helping with any heavy lifting projects like moving compost.

**In-Kind Donations** — Local hardware stores or grocery stores may be able to donate specific tools or food items to your program. Also, you can host a drive for individuals in the community to donate something specific like kitchen tools.

**Financial Donations** — Many non-profit organizations offer funding opportunities. Websites like Donors Choose also provide a way to collect financial donations from individuals.



## Sample Community Resources

### Cooperative Extension

Cooperative Extension is a great resource for helping you find farmers, Master Gardener volunteers, soil testing, and school garden resources. Every Georgia County has a cooperative extension office.

Programs include:

- 4-H County and Club Meetings
- Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Program
- School Garden Curriculum
- ServSafe® Training
- Soil and Water Testing Services

You can find your extension office at:

University of Georgia: [www.extension.uga.edu](http://www.extension.uga.edu)

Fort Valley State University: [www.ag.fvsu.edu/index.php/extension](http://www.ag.fvsu.edu/index.php/extension)

### Future Farmers of America

Future Farmers of America (FFA) is a group of students, teachers and agribusiness to solidify support for agricultural education. Many Georgia school districts have active FFA programs in middle and high schools. Student members are engaged in a wide range of agricultural education activities and often provide service hours for agricultural related projects in their community.

[www.georgiaffa.org](http://www.georgiaffa.org)

### Georgia Farm Bureau Federation

The Georgia Farm Bureau Federation is Georgia's largest and strongest voluntary agricultural organization with almost 300,000 member families. It is an independent, non-governmental organization. The membership is mainly composed of farm families in rural communities and of people who want Georgia to be agriculturally successful, progressive and prosperous. Georgia Farm Bureau often offers education and grants.

[www.gfb.org/about-us/about-georgia-farm-bureau.cms](http://www.gfb.org/about-us/about-georgia-farm-bureau.cms)

### Scouts USA

Scouts USA (formerly Boy Scouts of America) is a year-round program for youth in fifth grade through high school that provides fun, adventure, learning, challenge, and responsibility to help them become the best version of themselves. Eagle Scouts complete service projects, such as building gardens.

[www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org)



### Girl Scouts

A youth organization for girls in the United States. Girl Scouts often participate in service projects.

[www.girlscouts.org](http://www.girlscouts.org)

### Hardware Stores

National and local hardware stores frequently donate seeds, soil and tools for school gardens. Just go in, introduce yourself, and ask!

### Universities and Technical Colleges

Students in early education, nutrition and dietetics often need pre-service hours. Check with your local institution to see if any students would be interested in volunteering for taste tests, gardening lessons or reading books!



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## Appendix

## Curriculums and Activity Resources that Support Farm to Early Care and Education

Title	Program	Description	Target Age Group	Garden	Recipes	Where to find it
<b>Curriculums and Activity Resources</b>						
Grow it, Try it, Like it!	USDA	<p>Activity sets introduce children to peaches, strawberries, cantaloupe, spinach, sweet potatoes, and Crookneck squash.</p> <p>Each activity set includes hands-on activities, planting activities, and nutrition education activities that introduce MyPlate.</p>	3-5	x	x	<a href="http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it">www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it</a>
Harvest for Healthy Kids	Portland State University	<p>Activity sets introduce children to fruits and vegetables.</p> <p>Each activity set includes an activity plan, picture cards, teacher bites, newsletter, family newsletter in three languages, and recipes.</p>	0-5	x	x	<a href="http://www.harvestforhealthykids.org/">www.harvestforhealthykids.org/</a>
Food for Thought	Healthy and Active Preschoolers, California Department of Education	<p>Activity sets include Fruits and Vegetables, Go-Grains, Power up with Proteins, and Spring Snacking</p> <p>Each activity set includes a nutrition activity and integrated educational domains such as language arts, mathematics and science concepts.</p>	4-5		x	<a href="http://www.healthypreschoolers.com/?page_id=12">www.healthypreschoolers.com/?page_id=12</a>
Farm to Childcare Curriculum Package	Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy	<p>Activity sets introduce children to fruits and vegetables.</p> <p>Each activity set includes lessons for circle time, sensory and dramatic play, math, science, and arts. Ideas for newsletters, menus, flashcards, and family-size recipes to send home are also included.</p>	4-5	x	x	<a href="http://www.iatp.org/documents/farm-to-childcare-curriculum-package">www.iatp.org/documents/farm-to-childcare-curriculum-package</a>

Our First Harvest: Bilingual Pre-K Curriculum	City Blossoms	A bilingual, year-round curriculum consisting of 30 garden-related lessons plus all kinds of resources and helpful hints.	3-5	X	X	<a href="http://cityblossoms.org/shop/our-first-harvest">cityblossoms.org/shop/our-first-harvest</a>
Collective School Garden Network	Western Growers Association	Activities database searchable by "Pre-K to Kinder."	4-5	X		<a href="http://www.csgn.org/curriculum">www.csgn.org/curriculum</a>
Growing Minds Toolkit	Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project	The toolkit contains pre-K lesson plans, "This Week in the Garden" activity guides, and "Farm to School Goes Home" weekly newsletters.	4-5	X	X	<a href="https://growing-minds.org/farm-preschool-toolkit/">https://growing-minds.org/farm-preschool-toolkit/</a>
Early Sprouts	Early Sprouts Institute	This research-based early childhood curriculum is designed to increase children's preferences for nutritious fruits and vegetables.	4-5	X	X	<a href="http://www.earlysprouts.org/curriculum/">www.earlysprouts.org/curriculum/</a>
Sowing Seeds of Wonder	Life Lab	This book offers hands-on activities from the educators at Life Lab that teachers can incorporate into their curriculum and instruction to help students learn and lead healthy lives.	4-5	X	X	<a href="http://lifelab.z2systems.com/np/clients/lifelab/product.jsp?product=23&amp;">lifelab.z2systems.com/np/clients/lifelab/product.jsp?product=23&amp;</a>
<b>Other Resources</b>						
Guide to using the Creative Curriculum for Preschool to Support Farm to ECE Models	Policy Equity Group	This resource, aligns Farm to ECE strategies with one of the most widely used ECE curricula—The Creative Curriculum®.	0-5			<a href="http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/a-guide-to-using-the-creative-curriculum-for-preschool-to-support-farm-to-ece-models">www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/a-guide-to-using-the-creative-curriculum-for-preschool-to-support-farm-to-ece-models</a>
Taste Test Box	Small Bites Adventure Club	Hands-on Cooking Kit featuring local food from farmers delivered directly to schools.	4-5	X		<a href="https://smallbites.club/">https://smallbites.club/</a>
Growing Head Start Success with Farm to Early Care and Education	National Farm to School Network	Overview of how Farm to ECE aligns with Head Start programming.	0-5			<a href="http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/growing-head-start-success-with-farm-to-early-care-and-education">www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/growing-head-start-success-with-farm-to-early-care-and-education</a>
Georgia Farm to ECE Crosswalk	Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning	Simple tool that aligns Farm to ECE activities with ECRS-3	4-5			<a href="http://georgiaorganics.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ECERS-3-Farm-to-Preschool-Crosswalk.pdf">http://georgiaorganics.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ECERS-3-Farm-to-Preschool-Crosswalk.pdf</a>

Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) activities align with the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) and support high quality learning experiences for young children. The following examples demonstrate simple activities for early care providers and their corresponding standards.

Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards		Example Activity
Physical Development and Motor Skills	PDM4 - The child will use senses (sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste) to explore the environment and process information.	<b>Mystery bag:</b> Place a vegetable in a paper bag and encourage children to describe what they feel before peaking. Encourage children to close their eyes and smell herbs like mint and rosemary one at a time.
Approaches to Play and Learning	APL3 - The child will sustain attention to a specific activity and demonstrate persistence.	<b>Prepare a snack:</b> Children love making a simple herb ranch dressing and dipping veggie sticks. This activity reinforces comprehension and listening skills.
Cognitive Development and General Knowledge	CD-MA1 - The child will organize, represent, and build knowledge and quantity	<b>Host a taste test:</b> Present a few varieties of apples or tomatoes and encourage children to vote on their favorite. By raise of hands, children vote, and then count the total votes and display the results in the classroom.
	CD-MA4 - the child will sort, seriate, classify, and create patterns. PDM6 - The child will demonstrate fine motor skills	<b>Seed explorations:</b> Fill a bowl with a variety of seeds, and encourage children to organize into shapes, colors and sizes by separating them into an empty egg carton.
	CD-SC3 - The child will demonstrate knowledge related to living things and their environments.	<b>Color and shape hunt:</b> Using paint swatch samples, encourage children to “find” the same colors on plants found outside.
Communication, Language and Literacy	CLL2 - The child will acquire vocabulary introduced in conversations, activities, stories, and/or books.	<b>Read a book:</b> Explore the many books about food, farming, gardening and cooking and learn new vocabulary words like germination, vegetation, harvest, and soil.
	CLL7 - The child will demonstrate increasing knowledge of the alphabet.	<b>Writing:</b> Encourage children to write the first letter of their favorite vegetable, and draw a picture.



Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) activities align many existing ECE standards and indicators. See examples:

Sample Standards, Indicators, and Goals		Example Activity
Georgia Early Learning Development Standards (GELDS)	Cognitive Development and General Knowledge: Math CD:MA1- The child will organize, represent, and build knowledge and quantity.	Children taste a variety of apples, vote on their favorite and record the results.
Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - 3rd Edition (ECERS-3)	Language and Literacy  5.1- Helping children expand vocabulary.	Teachers are heard talking to the children about the garden and what the children are doing. The teacher names the items growing (radish, carrot, collards) and describes the tools (trowel, spade, watering can) by explaining their use.
Quality Rated	Standard 2- 4.6 - Edible gardens are developed and used as a learning resource.	Children plant radish seeds and practice numbers by counting the days until harvest.
USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	Best Practices: Incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals.	Each week, highlight one item from Georgia's Harvest of the Month on the lunch menu.
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	10.D. – Health, Nutrition, and Safety Policies and Procedures: The program has written policies to promote wellness and safeguard the health and safety of children and adults. Procedures are in place that address the providing of adequate nutrition for children and adults,  2.G.07 Curriculum Content Area for Cognitive Development: Science	Evidence could include the implementation of a wellness policy that included language about how the school promotes fresh, local food in meals and classroom activities.  Scientific concepts include things such as life cycles of organisms, structure and property of matter, weather, seasons, time, light and shadow.
Head Start	Subpart D - Health Program Services 1302.46: Family support services for health, nutrition and mental health.  Sub-domain: Gross Motor Goal IT-PMP 4. Child demonstrates effective and efficient use of large muscles to explore the environment.	Procurement: Share information about community resources that aid families in purchasing healthy, local food, such as a list of farmers markets that accept SNAP or offer SNAP incentives. Education: Connect with community partners to offer interactive cooking classes that highlight seasonal, local, and affordable foods.  Have children help carry gardening tools into the garden space, navigating different surfaces and moving around garden beds.



## Farm to Early Care and Education and Head Start: A Natural Alignment

Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) offers benefits that strongly parallel the goals and priorities of Head Start. Head Start programs emphasize experiential learning opportunities, parent and community engagement, and life-long health and wellness for children, families and caregivers.

To make it even easier for Head Start stakeholders to implement Farm to ECE, the National Farm to School Network has created [Growing Head Start Success with Farm to Early Care and Education](#). This new, comprehensive resource details how Farm to ECE supports achievement of [Head Start Program Performance Standards](#) and contributes to learning and development benchmarks as outlined in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. *Growing Head Start Success* is designed with clear, easy to read tables that directly align Program Performance Standards and the Early Learning Outcomes Framework with specific Farm to ECE activities from each of the three core elements of local procurement, gardening and food, agriculture and nutrition education. The resource also offers three profiles of Head Start programs leading the way in addressing performance and learning standards with Farm to ECE and their tips for integrating farm to ECE in Head Start.

By promoting this resource widely, we hope that even more Head Start programs choose Farm to ECE to meet program and learning standards while providing children, families and communities with the myriad benefits that Farm to ECE has to offer. To dig into this new resource and find additional ways to get involved in Farm to ECE, visit the [National Farm to School Network's Farm to ECE Landing Page](#). NFSN is available to provide additional training, customized support and tools for your organization on a consultation basis.

To learn more, contact Lacy Stephens, Farm to Early Care and Education Associate, at [lacy@farmtoschool.org](mailto:lacy@farmtoschool.org).



These are some of our favorite books about growing, cooking, and tasting food. We have selected texts that feature characters from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, many of which are authored by writers of color.

### Growing

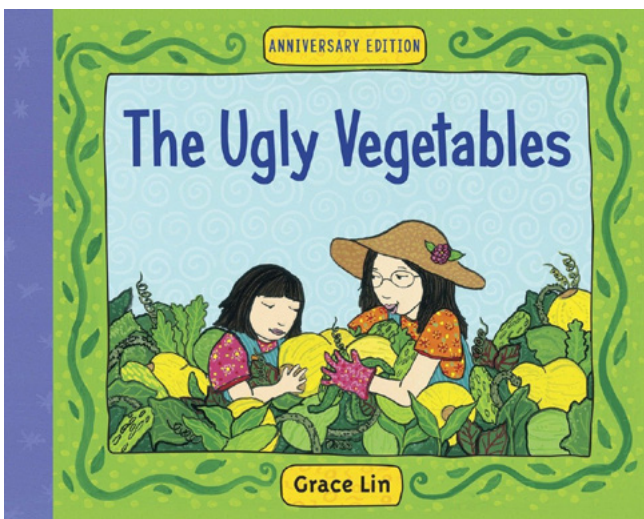
- In My Garden, by National Geographic Kids
- My Garden, by Kevin Henkes
- Lenny In The Garden, by Ken Wilson-Max
- Green Green: A Community Gardening Story, by Marie Lamba and Baldev Lamba
- What's In The Garden?, by Marianne Berkes
- Grandma Lena's Big Ol' Turnip, by Denia Lewis Hester
- Lola Plants a Garden, by Anna McQuinn
- How a Seed Grows, by Helene J. Jordan
- Little Seeds (My Little Planet), by Charles Ghigna
- From the Garden, by Michael Dahl
- Up, Down, Around, by Katherine Ayres
- One Bean, by Anne Rockwell
- The Carrot Seed, by Ruth Krauss
- City Green, by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan
- The Ugly Vegetables, by Grace Lin
- Plant A Little Seed, by Bonnie Christensen
- The Tiny Seed, by Eric Carle
- Our Community Garden, by Barbara Pollak
- Planting a Rainbow, by Lois Elhert
- The Apple Tree (English and Cherokee), by Sandy Tharp-Thee
- Seed Magic, by Jane Buchanan
- Rainbow Stew, by Cathryn Falwell
- Fresh-Picked Poetry: A Day At The Farmers' Market, by Michelle Schaub

### Cooking and Tasting

- Plants Feed Me, by Lizzy Rockwell
- Before We Eat, by Pat Brisson
- Mealtime (Toddler Tools), by Elizabeth Verdick
- Let's Eat! A Comer!, by Pat Mora
- Lenny Has Lunch, by Ken Wilson-Max
- I Can Eat a Rainbow, by Annabel Karmel
- Eating the Alphabet, by Lois Elhert
- Everybody Cooks Rice, by Norah Dooley
- Everybody Bakes Bread, by Norah Dooley
- Everybody Serves Soup, by Norah Dooley
- Everybody Brings Noodles, by Norah Dooley
- Kitchen Dance, by Maurie J. Manning
- Full, Full, Full Of Love, by Trish Cook
- The Sandwich Swap, by Queen Rania of Jordan Al Abdullah
- Dim Sum for Everyone, by Grace Lin
- No Kimchi for Me!, by Aram Kim
- Babies Can't Eat Kimchee!, by Nancy Patz
- Too Many Tamales, by Gary Soto
- A Season For Mangoes, by Regina Hanson
- Bee-bim Bop!, by Linda Sue Park
- Lailah's Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story, by Reem Faruqi
- Sweet Potato Pie, by Kathleen D. Lindsey
- Hungry Johnny, by Cheryl Kay Minnema
- Auntie Yang's Great Soybean Picnic, by Ginnie Lo

### Other

- Green Is a Chile Pepper: A Book Of Colors, by Roseanne Greenfield Thong
- Round Is a Tortilla: A Book of Shapes, by Roseanne Greenfield Thong
- Round is a Mooncake: A Book of Shapes, by Roseanne Greenfield Thong
- Fruits: A Caribbean Counting Poem, by Valerie Bloom



## Songs about Gardens and Food

Young children love songs! Here are a few fun and easy tunes.  
See if you can create some new food and gardening songs with your students!

### Dirt Made My Lunch

Dirt made my lunch,  
Dirt made my lunch.  
Thank you Dirt, thanks a bunch,  
For my salad, my sandwich  
My milk and my munch 'cause  
Dirt, you made my lunch.

Credit: Banana Slug String Band (to hear the tune, go here: [bananaslugs.bandcamp.com/track/dirt-made-my-lunch-3](https://bananaslugs.bandcamp.com/track/dirt-made-my-lunch-3))

### Planting Time

Sung to: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"

Dig, dig, dig the earth  
(make digging motion)  
Then you plant your seeds  
(pretend to drop seeds)  
A gentle rain  
(Flutter fingers down)  
And bright sunshine  
(Circle arms above head)  
Will help your flowers grow  
(Hold one arm parallel to ground and move other arm up behind it with  
fingers extended to represent a flower growing)

### I'll Plant A Little Seed

Sung to: "I'm A Little Teapot"

I'll plant a little seed in the dark, dark ground.  
Out comes the yellow sun, big and round.  
Down comes the cool rain, soft and slow.  
Up comes the little seed, grow, grow, grow!

### Seeds

Sung to: "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star"

Dig a hole deep in the ground  
Spread some tiny seeds around  
Pat them down - so they will keep  
They are lying fast asleep  
Rain will help the seeds to grow  
Sunshine keeps them warm I know

Source: [www.preschooleducation.com/sgarden.shtml](http://www.preschooleducation.com/sgarden.shtml)



## BRIGHT FROM THE START

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning  
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, SE, Suite 754, East Tower, Atlanta, Georgia 30334  
(404) 656-5957

**Nathan Deal**  
GOVERNOR

**Amy M. Jacobs**  
COMMISSIONER

The purpose of this list is to familiarize child care programs with some of the common plants known to have poisonous properties. Generally, these plants and plant components need to be ingested for there to be a poisonous exposure. The term "POISONOUS" does not imply that the plant is fatal. Many of these plants are only mildly toxic, causing stomach ache or mild irritation of the mouth and throat when ingested. This list is **NOT** intended to discourage child care programs from planting any of the plants on the list, or removing already planted trees and plants, but to make you aware of their potential hazard.

If possible, have all the trees, plants, and shrubs that are on or near the child care property identified by a landscaper, arborist, etc. Keep record of what is growing on the grounds, potentially label or tag the trees and larger shrubs (this could be an educational benefit for the older kids). If any child is seen holding, touching, playing with, or potentially eating any of these plants, trees, or shrubs, call the GPC at 404-616-9000 for further advice as soon as possible. If child care programs have a record of what is growing on the property, this could be of significant benefit when providing treatment advice.

If you have any questions, call Child Care Services at 404-657-5562 or email [childcareservices@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:childcareservices@dec.al.ga.gov).

Thank you,  
Child Care Services

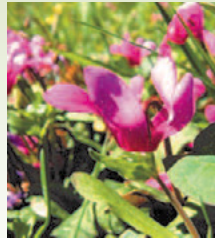
## The Facts About Poinsettias

Poinsettias are not the deadly plant they were once thought to be. If eaten, the plant may cause burning in the mouth and may cause a stomach ache.

## Plant Safety

To help prevent plant poisonings, follow these safety tips:

- Know the names of all the plants in your home and yard. A nursery, florist, or your county extension agent can help you to identify a plant.
- Label all your plants with their names, so you can tell what it is if a piece has been eaten.
- Keep house plants, seeds, and bulbs out of the reach and sight of children and pets.
- Do not eat wild plants or mushrooms. Cooking poisonous plants does not make them safe to eat.
- Remove mushrooms that are growing in your yard. Throw them away in a covered garbage can.
- Keep weed and bug killers in a locked cabinet, out of the reach of children and pets. Never put them in bottles used for drinking.
- Keep children and pets away from lawns that were just treated with garden chemicals.
- Teach your children to never put any part of a plant into their mouths.



## Know What To Do In A Poisoning Emergency

- Keep the telephone number of the Georgia Poison Center on or near your telephones.
- If any part of a plant is eaten, remove as much of the plant as possible from the mouth and call the Georgia Poison Center right away! Do not wait for the victim to look or feel sick.

## THE GEORGIA POISON CENTER

Each year, the Georgia Poison Center (GPC) provides services to thousands of people in Georgia. You can call the GPC to get help in a poisoning emergency or to get treatment advice about animal or insect bites. Nurses, pharmacists, and doctors answer the phones 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. They can tell you what to do if you, your child, or your pet is poisoned or was bitten by an animal. In addition, the GPC staff can answer questions about poisons in and around your home.

All calls to the GPC are free.

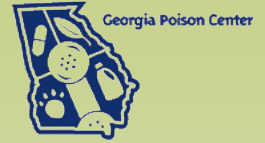
To order educational material, call the Education Department at 404.616.9235 or visit our website at [www.georgiapoisoncenter.org](http://www.georgiapoisoncenter.org).

Georgia Poison Center  
Grady Health System  
80 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, SE  
PO Box 26066  
Atlanta, GA 30303-3050



Supported in part by Project H4B MC00011-01 from MCHB, HRSA, US DHHS

Certified as a Regional Poison Center by the American Association of Poison Control Centers



## POISONOUS PLANTS



IN A POISONING EMERGENCY,  
CALL 24-HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS  
A WEEK:  
1-800-222-1222

Teletype for the deaf and hearing  
Impaired only: TDD 404-616-9287

Both indoor and outdoor plants can be poisonous. Some plants may cause symptoms such as an upset stomach, or skin rash. Some may harm your heart, kidneys, and other organs. Some plants that are thought to be non-poisonous, can cause an upset stomach if they are eaten.

## Poisonous Plants

Amaryllis	Castor Oil Plant/Caster Bean
American Ivy/Virginia Creeper	Cedar Tree
Anemone	Cherry, Laurel, Black
Apricot (seeds and pits)	Chinaberry
Aralia, Ming	Chinese Lantern/Cape
Azalea/Rhododendron	Gooseberry/Winter Cherry
Baneberry	Choke Cherry
Belladonna/Deadly Nightshade	Chrysanthemum
Birch Tree	Clematis
Bird of Paradise	Crown of Thorns/Euphorbia
Bittersweet/Woody Nightshade	Cyclamen
Bleeding Heart/Dicentra	Daffodil/Jonquil/Narcissus
Boxwood	Deadly Nightshade/Belladonna
Buckeye/Horse Chestnut	Devil's Ivy/Pothos
Burning Bush/Euonymus	Dicentra/Bleeding Heart
Bursting Heart/Euonymus	Dieffenbachia/Dumb Cane
Caladium	Elder (bark, shoots, leaves, roots, unripe berries)
Candelabra Cactus	Elephant's Ear/Philodendron
Cape Gooseberry/Chinese Lantern/Winter Cherry	

English Ivy	Oleander
Eucalyptus (dried)	Pansy (seeds)
Euphorbia/Crown of Thorns	Peace Lily
Euonymus	Peach (seeds and pits)
Flowering Tobacco	Pencil Cactus
Four O'Clock	Peony
Foxglove	Periwinkle/Vinca
Gladiola (bulb)	Philodendron/Elephant's Ear
Holly (berries, leaves)	Plum (seeds and pits)
Horse Chestnut/Buckeye	Poison Hemlock
Hyacinth	Poison Ivy, Oak, Sumac
Hydrangea	Pokeweed/Pokeberry
Iris	Poppy
Ivy (Devil's, American, English)	Potato (leaves, all green parts)
Jasmine, Yellow Carolina	Pothos/Devil's Ivy
Jequirity/Rosary Pea	Rhododendron/Azalea
Jerusalem Cherry	Rosary Pea/Jequirity
Jimsonweed	Split Leaf/Philodendron
Jonquil/Daffodil/Narcissus	Sweet Pea (seeds)
Juniper (berries)	Sweet William
Lantana	Tomato (stems, leaves)
Larkspur	Vinca/Periwinkle
Laurel	Virginia Creeper/American
Ligustrum/Wild Privet	Ivy
Lily of the Valley	Water Hemlock
Mistletoe	Wild Privet/Ligustrum
Monkshood	Winter Cherry/Cape
Morning Glory (seeds)	Gooseberry/Chinese Lantern
Mulberry (leaves, bark, sap)	Wisteria
Mushrooms	Woody Nightshade/Bittersweet
Narcissus/Daffodil/Jonquil	Yarrow
Nightshade	Yew
Oak Tree (leaves, acorns)	

## Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, And Poison Sumac

The sap from poison ivy, oak, and sumac plants can cause a rash, burning, and itching if touched. If you come into contact with the sap, a skin rash may appear within a few hours to two days. The rash may take one to two weeks to go away. In some people, the sap can cause an allergic reaction.

If you touch poison ivy, oak, or sumac...

- Wash the area with warm, soapy water right away.
- Wash any clothing and garden tools you think may have sap on it.
- Try not to scratch your rash since this can cause it to get worse.

*You can only get the rash from touching the sap; you cannot get the rash from touching another person's rash.*

To avoid touching these plants, keep covered up while outdoors! Wear long pants, long sleeves and gloves when working in your yard. Stay on trails while hiking or camping in the woods!

Do not burn Poison Ivy, Poison Oak or Poison Sumac. The smoke can cause breathing problems

Poison Ivy has shiny green leaves that grow in groups of three. Poison ivy may grow as a vine or as a low shrub.



Poison Oak also has leaves grouped in three. It grows as a low shrub, which may have clusters of green or white berries.



Poison Sumac has 7-13 leaves found in pairs with a single leaf at the end. These long, smooth leaves are bright orange and velvet-like in the spring. They become dark green and glossy on top and light green underneath. Sumac grows as a tree in swampy areas.



**\*Average Frost Dates: Avg. First Frost Dates:** South Georgia: Nov.21-30, North Georgia: Nov.1-20;  
**Avg. Last Frost Date:** South Georgia: March 21-31, North Georgia: April 1-30

*This calendar was created with planting information from the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.*

	TRANSPLANT OR DIRECT SEED	DAYS TO MATURITY	SPRING PLANTING DATES	FALL PLANTING DATES	DISTANCE BETWEEN ROWS	DISTANCE BETWEEN PLANTS	DEPTH TO PLANT
<b>ASPARAGUS</b>	Either	2nd year	Jan. 15 - Mar. 15	Nov. & Dec.	3 - 5 ft.	1 ½ - 2 ft.	6 in.
<b>BEAN, BUSH</b>	Direct Seed	50-60	Mar. 15 - May 1	Jul. 5 - Aug. 10	3 ft.	2 - 4 in.	1 - 1 ½ in.
<b>BEAN, POLE</b>	Direct Seed	56-75	Mar. 15 - May 10	Jul. 1 - Aug. 1	3 ft.	6 - 12 in.	1 - 1 ½ in.
<b>BEAN, LIMA</b>	Direct Seed	65-75	Mar. 15 - Jun. 1	Jul. 1 - Aug. 1	2 - 2 ½ ft.	3 - 4 in.	1 - 1 ½ in.
<b>BEET</b>	Direct Seed	55-65	Feb. 15 - Apr. 1	Aug. 1 - Sep. 20	2 - 2 ½ ft.	2 in.	1 in.
<b>BROCCOLI</b>	Either	60-80	Feb. 15 - Mar. 15	Aug. 1 - Sep. 1	2 ½ ft.	14 - 18 in.	1/4 - 1/2 in.
<b>CABBAGE</b>	Either	70-120	Jan. 15 - Mar. 15	Aug. 1 - Oct. 1	2 ½ ft.	12 in.	1/4 - 1/2 in.
<b>CANTALOUPE</b>	Either	80-90	Mar. 20 - Jun. 20	Not recommended	4 - 6 ft.	3 ½ - 4 ft.	1 ½ in.
<b>CARROT</b>	Direct Seed	70-95	Jan. 15 - Mar. 20	Aug. 20 - Sep. 15	2 ft.	2 - 3 in.	1/2 in.
<b>CAULIFLOWER</b>	Either	60-75	Mar. 1 - Apr. 1	Jul. 15 - Aug. 15	3 ft.	12 - 18 in.	1/4 - 1/2 in.
<b>COLLARD</b>	Either	55-85	Feb. 1 - Mar. 15	Aug. 1 - Sep. 1	2 ½ ft.	8 - 16 in.	1/2 in.
<b>CORN</b>	Direct Seed	65-90	Mar. 15 - Jun. 1	June 1 - Jul. 20	3 - 3 ½ ft.	12 - 18 in.	2 in.
<b>CUCUMBER</b>	Direct Seed	50-65	Apr. 1 - May 15	Jul. 15 - Aug. 15	3 ½ - 5 ft.	3 - 4 ft.	1 ½ in.
<b>EGGPLANT</b>	Transplant	75-90	Apr. 1 - May 15	Jul. 10 - Jul. 30	3 ft.	2 ½ - 3 ft.	1/2 in.
<b>KALE</b>	Either	50-70	Feb. 1 - Mar. 10	Aug. 1 - Sep. 1	3 ft.	10 in.	1/2 in.
<b>LETTUCE</b>	Direct Seed	60-85	Jan. 15 - Mar. 1	Sep. 1 - Oct. 1	2 - 2 ½ ft.	10 - 12 in.	1/2 in.
<b>MUSTARD</b>	Either	40-50	Jan. 15 - Apr. 1	Aug. 15 - Sep. 15	2 ft.	1 in.	1/2 in.
<b>OKRA</b>	Direct Seed	55-65	Apr. 1 - Jun. 1	Jun. 15 - Jul. 10	3 - 3 ½ ft.	6 in.	1 in.
<b>ONION</b>	Transplant	100-120	Jan. 1 - Mar. 15	Sep. 1 - Dec. 31	1 - 2 ft.	3 - 4 in.	3/4 in.
<b>PEAS, SWEET</b>	Direct Seed	60-80	Jan. 15 - Feb. 15	Not recommended	2 1/2 ft.	1 in.	1 ½ - 2 in.
<b>PEAS, FIELD</b>	Direct Seed	60-70	Apr. 1 - Aug. 1	Not recommended	3 ft.	4 - 6 in.	1 ½ - 2 in.
<b>PEPPER</b>	Transplant	65-80	Apr. 1 - Jun. 1	Not recommended	2 ½ ft.	1 ½ - 2 ft.	1/4 - 1/2 in.
<b>POTATO, IRISH</b>	Either	70-90	Jan. 15 - Mar. 1	Aug. 1 - Aug. 15	2 ½ - 3 ft.	10 - 14 in.	5 in.
<b>POTATO, SWEET</b>	Either	90-120	Apr. 15 - Jun. 15	Not recommended	3 ½ ft.	12 in.	Half the length of the slip
<b>RADISH</b>	Direct Seed	25-30	Jan. 15 - Apr. 1	Sep. 1 - Aug. 15	1 ½ ft.	1 in.	1/2 in.
<b>SPINACH</b>	Direct Seed	40-45	Jan. 15 - Mar. 15	Sep. 1 - Oct. 15	1 ½ - 2 ft.	1 - 2 in.	3/4 in.
<b>SQUASH, SUMMER</b>	Direct Seed	40-55	Apr. 1 - May 15	Aug. 1 - Aug. 25	3 - 4 ft.	2 ft.	1 ½ - 2 in.
<b>SQUASH, WINTER</b>	Direct Seed	85-120	Apr. 1 - Jul. 1	Not recommended	5 ft.	3 ft.	1 ½ - 2 in.
<b>TOMATO</b>	Transplant	70-90	Mar. 25 - May 1	Jun. 15 - Jul. 15	3 - 4 ft.	2 ½ - 3 ft.	1/4 in.
<b>TURNIP</b>	Direct Seed	40-60	Jan. 15 - Apr. 1	Aug. 10 - Sep. 15	1 - 2 ft.	1 - 2 in.	1/2 in.
<b>WATERMELON</b>	Direct Seed	80-90	Mar. 20 - May 1	Not recommended	10 ft.	8 - 10 ft.	1 ½ in.

**\*\*Notes:** Planting dates in this chart are for middle Georgia. North Georgia plantings should vary about two weeks later in the spring and earlier in the fall. South Georgia plantings can be made two weeks earlier in the spring and somewhat later in the fall. **For more info, visit [georgiaorganics.org/for-schools](http://georgiaorganics.org/for-schools)**



# Annual Harvest Calendar

REGULAR SEASON  
 SEASON EXTENSION

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
APPLES												
ARUGULA												
ASPARAGUS												
BASIL												
BEANS												
BEETS												
BLUEBERRIES												
BOK CHOY												
BROCCOLI												
BRUSSEL SPROUTS												
CABBAGE												
CANTALOUPE												
CARROTS												
COLLARDS												
CORN-SWEET												
CUCUMBERS												
CUT FLOWERS												
EGGPLANT												
FIGS												
GARLIC-CURED												
GARLIC-GREEN												
GRAPES-MUSCADINE												
KALE & OTHER GREENS												
LETTUCE												
MUSHROOMS												
OKRA												
PEACHES												
PEAS-ENGLISH												
PEAS-FIELD												
PECANS												
PEPPERS												
PERSIMMONS												
PLUMS												
POTATOES-IRISH												
POTATOES-SWEET												
RADISH												
SEEDLINGS												
SOYBEAN- EDAMAME												
SPINACH												
SQUASH-SUMMER												
SQUASH-WINTER												
STRAWBERRIES												
TOMATOES												
TURNIPS												
VIDALIA ONIONS												
WATERMELON												





**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

DATE: March 13, 2015

MEMO CODE: CACFP 11-2015

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

SUBJECT: Local Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program with  
Questions and Answers

3101 Park  
Center Drive  
Alexandria, VA  
22302-1500

TO: Regional Directors  
Special Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

State Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All States

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance on the incorporation of local foods and agriculture-based curriculum in early childhood education and care settings. The memorandum also clarifies policies in the recently published FNS Instruction 796-2, Revision 4, Financial Management in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) relevant to local food production and procurement. Finally, this memorandum includes questions and answers regarding procuring local food for use in the CACFP, growing food for use in CACFP, and donations.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010 amended the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to expand the purpose of the CACFP to “provide aid to child and adult care institutions and family or group day care homes for the provision of nutritious foods that contribute to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of young children, and the health and wellness of older adults and chronically impaired disabled persons” [42 USC 1766(a)(1)(A)(ii)]. Further, Section 243 of the HHFKA established a Farm to School Program at the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to increase the availability of local foods in schools and institutions. FNS continues to provide grants and technical assistance to implement Farm to School programs that improve access to local foods in the Child Nutrition Programs, including CACFP.

The incorporation of local food and agricultural education into CACFP can play an important role in creating and promoting a healthy environment. There is a well-established and growing public interest in supporting local and regional food systems by purchasing these foods and incorporating agricultural-based curriculum and activities into early childhood education and care. Program administrators and partners are therefore encouraged to use local food as a means to enhance CACFP operations.

The recently issued FNS Instruction 796-2, Revision 4, Financial Management of the CACFP, now categorizes costs associated with growing food that will be used in the CACFP, either as part of the meal service or for activities related to nutrition education to food service staff, as allowable. These costs may include seeds, fertilizer, labor, plot rental, etc. Institutions are subject to 7 CFR Part 226.22 and therefore must conduct all procurements in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200.317-326. These procurement standards must be followed regardless of dollar amount, meal served or purchasing frequency. Facilities, such as day care homes and sponsored centers are encouraged to purchase in a way that promotes open and fair competition. For more information, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/796-4.pdf>.

State agencies are reminded to distribute this information to Program operators immediately. Program operators should direct any questions regarding this memorandum to the appropriate State agency. State agency contact information is available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts>. State agencies should direct questions to the appropriate FNS Regional Office.

**Original Signed**

Angela Kline  
Director  
Policy and Program Development Division  
Child Nutrition Programs

## Questions and Answers Related to Use of Local Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

### A. General

#### 1. What is Farm to School/Farm to Preschool?

The term “Farm to School” encompasses efforts that bring local or regionally produced foods into cafeterias along with hands-on learning activities and the integration of food-related education into the regular, standards-based classroom curriculum. Farm to Preschool, the incorporation of these activities in early childcare and education settings, is a great way to introduce young children to where their food comes from, and help them develop lifelong healthy eating habits.

Farm to Preschool encompasses a variety of efforts that might include:

- Purchasing local and regional foods for reimbursable meals;
- Incorporating agricultural education programs into early childcare settings, such as Grow It, Try It, Like It, (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it-try-it-it>);
- Taste testing with locally-produced foods;
- Participating in a Harvest of the Month program;
- Starting and maintaining preschool gardens; and
- Taking field trips to local farmers markets and farms.

#### 2. How and where can CACFP institutions purchase local foods?

There are many ways in which institutions can incorporate local foods into their meals programs, including competitively purchasing directly from a producer, through a distributor or food service management company, or from food hubs, farmers’ markets, and gardens. See USDA’s Guide to Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs for a detailed description of each ([http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/F2S\\_Procuring\\_Local\\_Foods\\_Child\\_Nutrition\\_Prog\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/F2S_Procuring_Local_Foods_Child_Nutrition_Prog_Guide.pdf)).

A logical starting point may be for an institution to start asking about the source of the food they are currently purchasing. Some institutions may already be using local foods and not yet know it. Institutions can also communicate to current vendors and suppliers regarding their preference for local products.

Also, vendor solicitations may be written with characteristics of products from local sources in mind; for instance specifying a particular variety of apple that is native to your region, or that a product be delivered within 24 or 48 hours of harvest. Products from local sources may be expressed as a *preference*, but may not be *required* as a product specification.

Geographic preference may be used by institutions to procure locally grown or raised unprocessed foods. The institution making the purchase has the discretion to determine the local area to which the geographic preference option will be applied (7 CFR 226.22(n)(1)). Local area

is not defined by the USDA. Additional guidance on Geographic Preference can be found in CACFP 02-2013, *Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As – Part II*, October 9, 2012 (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/procurement-geographic-preference-qas-%E2%80%93-part-ii>).

Note that CACFP institutions must procure all goods and services using the procurement regulations found in 7 CFR 226.22 and 2 CFR Part 200.317-326. Additional guidance on procurement can be found in FNS Instruction 796-2 Rev. 4 ([www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/796-2%20Rev%204.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/796-2%20Rev%204.pdf)).

**3. How can CACFP facilities, such as day care homes and sponsored centers, purchase local foods?**

CACFP facilities can purchase local foods from any source, such as distributors, farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and food hubs, and are not required but are encouraged to purchase in a way that promotes open and fair competition. Additional guidance on procurement can be found in FNS Instruction 796-2 Rev. 4 ([www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/796-2%20Rev%204.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/796-2%20Rev%204.pdf)).

**4. When an institution purchases from a farm stand, farmer’s market, CSA, or directly from a farm, are handwritten receipts acceptable forms of documentation of purchase?**

Yes. Handwritten receipts for items purchased are acceptable documentation as long as the receipt includes the date of purchase, name of vendor/farmer, item cost, amount, and total cost.

**5. Can food that was donated from local gardens or farms be used as part of the reimbursable meal?**

Yes. While the full reimbursement for CACFP meals must be spent on allowable Child Nutrition Program costs, there is no Federal requirement that all of the food components be purchased with Program funds or that a specific percentage of the reimbursement be spent on food. It is an allowable practice for non-program resources to cover food expenses provided that an excessive balance is not present as determined by the State agency (Refer to *FNS Instruction 796-2, Revision 4, Financial Management of the CACFP, Section VI, D*). CACFP institutions must maintain records of the types and quantities of donated foods received, which will be assessed as part of their food service records during an administrative review.

**6. Can State agencies use their State Administrative Expense (SAE) Funds to provide training and technical assistance on this topic?**

Yes. FNS Instruction 781-2 includes providing technical assistance, nutrition education, and training as an allowable use of SAE provided that the funds are used to support State-level administrative activities. For more information on utilizing SAE funds to support state-level staff and training activities, see SP 28-2015 (correct number will be provided when memorandum is posted), *Questions and Answers Regarding the Use of State Administrative Expense (SAE) Funds and State Administrative Funds (SAF) for Farm to School Related Expenses*, March 13, 2015, (website will be updated when memorandum is posted to the public web).

## **B. Gardens and Growing Food**

This guidance for growing food for use in the CACFP meal service is consistent with the guidance provided to schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and operating school gardens. For more information, see SP 32-2009, *School Garden Q&As*, July 29, 2009, ([http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP\\_32-2009\\_os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP_32-2009_os.pdf)) and SP 06- 2015, *Farm to School and School Garden Expenses*, November 12, 2014, (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP06-2015os.pdf>).

### **1. Can an institution or facility use funds from the nonprofit food service account to purchase items for gardens such as seeds, fertilizer, watering cans, rakes, etc, to grow food that will be used in the food service?**

Yes. As long as the produce grown in the garden will be used as part of the reimbursable meal – and for nutritional education activities. Centers using garden produce in their CACFP reimbursable meals should document the weight and/or volume of the produce.

### **2. Can an institution sell food grown in their CACFP garden that was funded using the nonprofit food service account?**

Yes. As long as the revenue from the sale of the food accrues to the nonprofit food service account. Institutions or facilities may serve the produce as part of a reimbursable meal or sell it a la carte to parents, at a roadside stand, etc.

### **3. Can an institution or facility purchase produce from another institution or facility that is maintaining and managing the garden, such as Future Farmers of America (FFA), which is an agricultural education program for students?**

Yes. An institution or facility may purchase produce from a garden run by a school organization such as FFA as long as documentation includes the date of purchase, name of organization, item cost, amount, and total cost.

### **4. May funds received for serving At-Risk Afterschool meals be used to purchase seeds/tools/equipment for a garden?**

Yes. The At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program is a component of CACFP and is subject to the same rules as other CACFP components with regard to foods from local sources.

### **5. How may excess produce from the garden be used?**

The institution or facility should first see if the excess food can be used to benefit another program such as the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or NSLP. If that is not possible, the food may be sold or donated in accordance with State and local health/safety regulations. As always, any profits must accrue back to the nonprofit food service account. Please refer to SP 11-

2012, SFSP 07-2012, *Guidance on the Food Donation Program in Child Nutrition Programs*, February 3, 2012, for more information on donating food.

## **C. Food Safety**

### **1. Are there resources for handling produce safely in kitchens?**

National Food Service Management Institute's (NFSMI) publication *Ready, Set, Go! Creating and Maintaining a Wellness Environment in Child Care Centers Participating in the CACFP* (<http://www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=376>) provides best practices and assessment tools for the safe handling of food in child care facilities.

In addition, a produce-specific publication has been created for the school environment, and the best practices apply to many child care centers. NFSMI's publication *Best Practices: Handling Fresh Produce in Schools* (<http://nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=351>), developed for FNS, outlines recommendations for handling fresh produce at all steps in the food production process. Best practices address purchasing and receiving, washing and preparation, hand hygiene, serving, storage, and training, and general food safety practices. Specific recommendations for handling melons, tomatoes, leafy greens, and sprouts are also included.

FNS' Produce Safety University also identifies best practices for selecting, handling, and preparing produce for use in Child Nutrition Programs (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/food-safety/produce-safety-university>).

### **2. Is Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and/or Good Handling Practices (GHP) going to be a requirement for producers who sell to CACFP institutions?**

No. GAP/GHP certifications are required when selling fresh fruits and vegetables directly to USDA and if State and local governments require it. Local distributors, retailers, institutions, or facilities may have individual GAP/GHP related policies. However, including GAP/GHP certification as part of the terms and conditions in the solicitation process is encouraged.

### **3. Is there a specific amount of liability coverage that farmers or others providing local foods products for CACFP must carry?**

No. There is no specific amount of liability coverage required of farmers by USDA to sell to CACFP institutions or facilities. Institutions, facilities, States, distributors, retailers and food service management companies may all have different liability coverage requirements provided the requirements are not excessive which may potentially restrict competition. It is best to contact these entities for further information.

### **4. What other rules or regulations must farmers meet in order to sell to institutions or facilities?**

Farmers must meet all Federal, State and local regulations to sell their products within the Child Nutrition Programs. Local distributors may have additional requirements, such as third party audits or product liability insurance limits. Farmers and purchasers should check with their local health departments to ensure that local and State requirements are met.

CACFP 11-2015  
March 13, 2015

Interested in starting a school garden at your child care facility? Purchases to implement a child care facility garden may vary. The list below provides examples of items that may be purchased to implement a child care garden or to provide agriculture education and activities. Approval from Georgia DECAL may be required on certain items.

Purchasing these items may also be considered allowable costs in the CACFP.

- Aprons and gardening gloves (for children)
- Cold frames, green house
- Compost bins
- Containers
- Cooking demonstration supplies
- Expenses related to locating a school garden (making water reach the garden, clearing land, tilling)
- Training for staff and garden volunteers
- Fertilizers
- Garden tower
- Grow lights
- Hydroponic system
- Instructional materials, field guides, books
- Labor
- Material for walkways
- Materials for raised garden beds
- Means of watering – irrigation
- Mulch
- Organic material to improve soil, compost
- Pest controls – change verbiage
- Protections, fencing, row covers
- Rain barrel
- Row covers
- Seeds, starts, plants
- Soil test kit and amendments
- Garden supports
- Taste-test supplies and materials for children
- Tools
- Wheelbarrow
- Children’s handwashing stations for food safety in the garden
- Kitchen equipment needed to store fresh produce





**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

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