

Cedar Park Elementary

7500 Whitney Drive
Apple Valley, MN 55124



JeffersFoundation.org

Summary

Cedar Park has several school gardens and raised garden beds. They have several native gardens or biomes available on the school property. Families tend to the gardens in the summer months. All students are involved and lessons are tied to state standards.

Photos



Families work to maintain gardens during the summer.

Raised beds make gardening tasks easier as well as providing protection from rolling playground balls.



Details

Cedar Park Gardening Program

Cedar Park has raised garden beds growing vegetables as well as native habitat gardens on the school grounds. These provide opportunities for students to observe birds, insects, butterflies and other critters in natural settings. Each grade level is responsible for maintaining various garden areas. Teachers have created lessons and activities for students that are tied to Minnesota State Standards and are aligned to the grade level curriculum. All students in grades K-5 have the opportunity each year to plant, grow, maintain, and harvest. In the summer, families volunteer to maintain the gardens.

The purposes of the gardens are:

- To provide hands-on experiences to increase children's knowledge of plant science and entomology.
- To provide a local environment for children to explore nature.
- To involve students in the "seed-to-table" process where they can experience planting, harvesting, preparing, and eating food.
- To develop children's awareness of the interconnectedness of nature.

Types of Gardens

The native habitat gardens include an oak savannah, a mesic prairie, an ephemeral pond, tall grass prairie, and a dry prairie. There is also a small wooded area managed with the help of the MN School Forest program.



Ten raised bed gardens have been built, each with different themes, like the rainbow flower garden, the

Three Sisters Garden, and Roots, Stems and Flowers. The students participate in citizen science like Journey North's Tulip Garden project. The art teacher teaches lessons on botanical drawings using the garden as the "palette."

Family Involvement

Cedar Park solicits families who are interested in watching over a raised-bed garden for a week during the summer months. The gardens need to be watered and weeded. Families are invited to harvest and eat any of the vegetables that ripen or to pick the flowers that bloom in their adopted bed during their week. Tending the gardens keeps the plants healthy for students who come to summer school and assures the gardens are ready for the start of the new school year in September.

Garden Layout

■ *West side of the school*

Raised Bed 1: First Grade vegetables (for Second Grade study in the fall)

Raised Bed 2: First Grade vegetables

Raised Bed 3: First Grade vegetables

Raised Bed 4: Third Grade Three Sisters Garden—corn, beans and squash

Raised Bed 5: Third Grade Three Sisters Garden—corn, beans and squash

Raised Bed 6: Fifth grade sunflowers (for Kindergartners and bird feeders)

■ *East side of the school*

Raised Bed 7: Kindergarten pumpkins (for First Grade study in the fall)

Raised Bed 8: Kindergarten mini-pumpkins

Raised Bed 9: Second grade Rainbow Flower Garden

Raised Bed 10: Second grade Rainbow Flower Garden

Participation by Grade Level

■ *Kindergarten*

Spring - Plant a salad garden and harvest it for a meal in June. (2 beds) Plant pumpkin seeds in Beds 7 and 8

Fall – Study and harvest sunflowers; Study the rainbow flower garden; Tree study

■ *Grade One*

Spring – Study of soil; plant the raised bed vegetable gardens for second grade fall use. (3 beds)

Fall – Harvest the pumpkins they planted as Kindergartners; Insects in the gardens (Which gardens have the most insects/different kinds of insects? Sort helpful and harmful insects but go beyond people's point of view)

■ *Grade Two*

Spring - Plant the rainbow garden for the kindergartners (Beds 9 and 10)

Fall – Study, care for and harvest the vegetables planted when they were first graders

■ *Grade Three*

Spring – Tulip study; Plant the Three Sisters garden

Fall – Plant tulips for Journey North Tulip Project; study of annual and perennial plants; compare flower structures and adaptations in the Rainbow Gardens they planted as second graders.

■ *Grade Four*

Spring – Rock garden; study of the rain garden and it's purpose; plant a low-level water usage vegetable that can produce food for the school in the fall (2 beds)

Fall – Harvest the Three Sisters Garden; Study human water usage and designed systems like irrigation, water collection (agricultural and urban issues like runoff, phosphorus or polluted water).

■ *Grade Five*

Spring—Plant sunflower (or gourd) bed for the Kindergartners; care for the MN Habitat Restoration areas.

Fall – Harvest the low-level water usage vegetable beds for the school they planted as fourth graders (2 beds); run a composting program for the school to create compost for the gardens; clean the raised garden beds for compost; study the natural systems in the MN Habitat Gardens (ephemeral pond, oak savannah, prairies, run-off pond); worm count (invasive species)

For more information contact:

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