Steps to Creating a School Garden with California Native Plants

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Step 1. Select a theme for the garden

Step 2. Decide how the garden will be used

Step 3. Survey the site – taking stock. *Ideally, obtain a map of the site showing building locations, perimeter, etc.*

- Sunset zone and microclimates
- Soil type and soil testing
- Wind and sun exposure
- Water supply
- Existing vegetation
- Existing paths
- Utility lines
- Plot size
- Ease of access from classroom, for deliveries, etc.

If you have a say in the garden's location, broaden the survey to include all possible sites on the property.

Step 4. Other design considerations

- How much maintenance will be provided? *A critical question that will affect plant selection*
- How near/far is the water supply? Can a new system be installed?
- Do you need a gathering space with seating, tables, shade?
- Do you need to create new pathways?
- Maximizing wildlife habitat – *provide food year-round, shelter, water*

Step 5. Make a sketch of the proposed garden

Step 6. Prepare the site [some of these may not be necessary]

- Removing turf – identify what kind first, then choose appropriate method

- Getting rid of weeds

Identify what kind first, then choose best removal option

Grading

Do you want a level area, terraced beds, raised beds, a berm?

Soil amending

Add organic matter if site was formerly a parking lot, covered with concrete or asphalt, or the soil test recommends it

Lay out and install new paths

Install new irrigation system

Step 7. Planting!

Fall or winter best time of year. Cool temps ideal

Spacing – provide ample room for plants to grow to full potential

Gophers, rabbits, squirrels, deer, ants?

Size of hole and plant placement

Watering in

Mulch – depth, type

Step 8. Follow-up Care

During "establishment" – *proper watering most critical*

Long term – replenishing mulch, pruning, watering, pest management, fertilizing

Soil Testing Labs

Wallace Labs, 365 Coral Circle, El Segundo, CA 90245, 310-615-0116. www.us.wlabs.com

Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District, 4500 Glenwood Dr., Building A, Riverside, CA 92501, 951-683-7691 ext. 207. www.rcrcd.com

Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of California Cooperative Extension list of labs, https://www.mastergardeners.org/pdf/import/resources/Soil_testing_laboratory_list.pdf