**School Garden and Growing Kit Tips**

The purpose of this document is to help you develop a successful garden kit set up for your student kits. Some plants are easier to grow than others. Some have larger seeds which are easier for small fingers to handle. Some sprout quickly, making your projects go faster. Some require all summer to get to harvest; some are ready to eat within a month. Choose seeds accordingly!

**Example of individual student kit might include (but may be altered based on your project):**

-Pot

-Baggie of potting soil

- Season-appropriate seeds (see suggestions below)

- A set of lessons from MAEF’s website

- Observation sheet

This is just an example and projects may vary!

**Seed and Planting Suggestions**

**Seed suggestions for springtime projects:**

Spinach – medium sized seeds, quick germination and harvest, eat at any stage.

Lettuce – smaller seeds, quick germination and harvest, eat at any stage.

Radish – medium sized seeds, quick germination and harvest, fun for teaching plant parts.

Nasturtium – large seeds, quick germination, leaves and flowers are edible.

Green beans – large seeds, quick germination and growth, harvest will require effort to provide them space and time and pollination.

Peas – large seeds, quick germination and growth, may be started earlier than other plants (March). Harvest will require some effort to provide them space and time and pollination.

Onion – purchase bulb sets (small bulbs that may be grown into larger bulbs), which are easy for small hands to work with and virtually guarantee success.

Potatoes – started from “seed potatoes,” these may be grown in a large pot and may be started early (March). Requires some space; harvest small tubers in late June if you’re lucky by digging up the plant.

**Seed suggestions for spring-summer-fall projects:**

Sweet potatoes – planted in spring, grow all summer and are harvested by digging in the fall.

Zinnias – easy to grow, bloom all summer, not edible.

**Suggestions for perennial plants for the schoolyard:**

Asparagus – tough and reliable; new shoots emerge from the ground in the spring and may be harvested. Stems that are not harvested grow into big, bushy, fernlike plants. Asparagus takes a few years to get to full production. In the meantime, harvest just a small portion of stems so that plant can use its energy to get established.

Strawberries – require little care and will multiply readily. Choose early varieties which will bear fruit around Mother’s Day and into June.

**Easy ways to demonstrate …**

* Germination – Ziploc bag, moistened paper towel, bean or pea seed.
* Parts of a plant – grow radishes, potatoes or tomatoes.
* Growing environments for plants – potatoes and peanuts grow underground; spinach/lettuce and tomatoes grow above ground. Radishes and onions bridge the two.
* Reading a plant label or seed packet – Many people say “I don’t know how to garden” but they don’t realize the instructions are provided on the label or seed packet! Planting depth, days to harvest and the water and sun requirements are usually shown.

**School Garden Sites**

Consider food safety – will dogs be peeing on your lettuce? Don’t plant under a bird feeder!

**If you have any questions about how to put together your kit, please email Amie McDaniels at amcdaniels@maefonline.com.**