

NEWS RELEASE

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Whole Kids Foundation Invests \$1.65M for 550 New Edible Gardens for Schools & Nonprofits Serving More Than 260,000 Students

Edible Educational Gardens Shown to Help Kids Make Healthier Food Choices, Learn Where Their Food Comes From & Become Veggie Curious

AUSTIN, Texas (April 21, 2020) — Just in time for Earth Day, Whole Kids Foundation, a nonprofit focused on children’s nutrition and wellness, announced today that 550 garden grants are being awarded to schools and school garden-support organizations to sustain edible educational gardens.

The \$1.65 million investment will serve 264,786 students by providing \$3,000 grants in 50 U.S. States, Puerto Rico and 9 Canadian provinces. Educational gardens provide hands-on experiential learning that ties into every common core subject, from math to science to art.

New this year, 100 previous Garden Grant recipients are receiving additional funding for ongoing support of garden-based education.

Whole Kids Foundation is allowing for flexibility in the delivery of grant packages as schools and organizations close due to COVID-19. Recipients can let Whole Kids Foundation know when and where they are ready to receive their grant, even opting to receive them at the start of the new school year in the fall.

The Garden Grant program provides grants to K-12 schools to support edible gardens on school grounds. Nonprofit recipients supporting children’s programming are funded to place gardens in non-school environments such as community gardens, libraries, museums or after-school programs.

In addition to the 550 monetary grants, more than 100 grant applicants who didn’t receive a garden grant this year, will receive a hydroponic growing system donated by Lettuce Grow. In addition to the Farmstand, recipients will receive a seedling starter pack and \$400 credit for supplies for one year. Through this unique partnership with Lettuce Grow, more schools and nonprofits will be able to grow fresh vegetables and use the Farmstand as a learning tool.

“Through our Garden Grant program, schools and nonprofit organizations transform outdoor spaces into vibrant hands-on outdoor classrooms that connect kids with food, spark their curiosity, and inspire them to make healthier choices for meals and snacks,” said Tristana Pirkl, Edible Education Leader for Whole Kids Foundation. “We truly believe in gardens as powerful learning spaces for nutrition, wellness and for all subjects!”

Gardens are becoming an increasingly common educational tool, and for good reason: school gardens are shown to improve children's academic performance and behavior at school and improve their attitudes about and appreciation for the environment. Experiential learning, which is learning by doing, also helps kids understand concepts in a real work context.

Additionally, only two percent of children eat enough fresh fruits and vegetables, but kids who have a hand in growing food have increased nutrition knowledge and an increased willingness to try, and a preference for, vegetables and fruits, according to [studies by the University of Colorado](#).

Edible educational gardens inspire children's curiosity and help develop healthy eating habits at a young age that can affect their entire family's eating habits.

"Curiosity is what we think of as our magic wand," said Nona Evans, President and Executive Director of Whole Kids Foundation. "When kids get to grow their own food, that's when curiosity kicks in. What science tells us is that when kids grow any food, their willingness to try other foods just opens up. If we can help kids become aware and understand the connection between what they put in their bodies and how they feel, then we get their curiosity and they will go anywhere."

Over the past nine years, Whole Kids Foundation has awarded funding for more than 6,000 gardens, investing \$12.6 million and benefiting 3.7 million kids.

Whole Kids Foundation accepts garden grant applications each year from September 1 – October 15. Grants are awarded each spring. Grants are available for schools and nonprofit organizations that work with kids in grades K-12 to grow edible gardens. For guidance on building a successful school garden, refer to our [Garden Resource Center](#). And to discover how past recipients have created innovative educational gardens, see these [success stories](#).

Additionally, Whole Kids Foundation offers activities, book recommendations, worksheets and resources online to inspire families to make and enjoy healthier food choices at <https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/parents-families>. For more information on Whole Kids Foundation Garden Grant program, visit <https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/programs/school-gardens-grant>.

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About Whole Kids Foundation

Whole Kids Foundation supports schools and inspires families to improve children's nutrition and wellness. Founded by Whole Foods Market in 2011, the independent, nonprofit organization is based in Austin, Texas, and serves schools and organizations in the U.S., Canada and the U.K. For more information on the Foundation's school programs including school gardens, salad bars, beehives, and nutrition education for teachers, visit wholekidsfoundation.org. For ongoing news and updates, follow Whole Kids Foundation on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#).