

## COMMUNITY-BASED GARDENING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY AND HEALTHY

*by:*

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Urban gardening can solve hunger by encouraging the public to grow food in their backyards or porches, using even the smallest spaces like with pots. Children can also learn urban gardening and taking care of plants at a young age – and this all starts at school. At this time, there are urban practical gardening systems that schools could easily adopt. Urban gardening could use the walls of buildings for hanging pots or recyclable plastic containers, and uses biodegradable wastes as compost and garden soil. What does having a school garden entail? It aims to serve healthy food to children, which comes straight from the school garden, which the students themselves have been taking care of. Not only will they be eating healthy food, but they will also benefit from it.

The goal of the Department Education is to end hunger among the school children, as hungry school children have difficulty keeping up with the lessons. In schools, no student should experience hunger. Meanwhile, the School Inside the Garden (SIGA) was initiated then to support the national goal for a “Clean and Green” society. It was created with the focus on growing flowers, medical herbs, exotic, and fruit-bearing trees. Through this program, learners were given an opportunity to care for plants, flowers, and trees which not only provide shade and color to campuses but also supports one of DepEd’s core values which is “Makakalikasan”. In reviving the program, the primary focus now is on establishing schools inside gardens featuring mostly flowering plants and endemic and native trees such as, but not limited to Narra Tree (*Pterocarpus indicus*) and Banaba (*Lagerstroemia speciosa*). Not only will this campuses green, but will also strengthen the

integration of environmental education both elementary and high school curriculum sustain the environmental consciousness and action among learners and community.

Students should be taught about the value of trees and other natural resources in maintaining the ecosystem. Remember, schools also play an important role in rehabilitating the natural environment. Tied-up with the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program, schools have been planting vegetables to not only green the campuses but also to support and reinforce the feeding program and income-generating projects of schools.

Contributing for the benefit of our Mother Nature while letting children learn is a win-win situation for all.

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