

HSOLC Head Start Gardens Design and Materials—Western Oregon



We try to design our gardens to be fun and attractive (organic, no weeds and mud), as well as enduring and low-maintenance. The rewards of our gardens include food, flowers, exploring our senses, having fun with tools, acquiring life skills, and learning about nature. We want to learn about the connections between people, plants, wildlife, and microbes by studying the soil food web (www.soilfoodweb.com). The goal of our efforts is to start children down the path of “BIOLOGICAL LITERACY and ENVIRONMENTAL INTELLIGENCE”.

Another goal of the Head Start of Lane County (HSOLC) Gardens Project is for the families of Head Start kids to have their own gardens at home.”

The Head Start gardens are part of the curriculum used to encourage children to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables. We have found when children grow fresh fruits and vegetables they eat more of them. We try to locate the garden to access the maximum amount of sunlight from the south.

We prepare the site by mowing the grass, and leveling the ground. Next we sprinkle garden lime or crushed oyster shell to lightly cover the ground, and rake it in a little. We use the oyster shell to reduce the acidity (raise the pH) of the soil, preventing any toxic heavy metals that might be present (lead, chrome, etc.) from leaching into our vegetables. We cover the site with landscape (weed block) fabric. The fabric suppresses nasty, perennial weeds like bindweed and quack grass.



We have built 33 gardens at Head Start of Lane County. We've used interlocking concrete landscape stones for 24 of the gardens to make raised beds with sides that are about a foot tall. The stones weigh about 25 pounds each, but are easy for unskilled volunteers to assemble. The stones are durable, non-toxic, and adaptable to curvy designs and hillside terracing. The sides of the beds are convenient for classes to sit on and to walk around. We use wood chips for the paths. Relocation is easy too as the stones are easily disassembled.



Garden to Do for February & March:

- The garden beds need complete fertilized or/and compost added.
- Berries need pruned.
- Planting starts in windowsill: Carrots, lettuce or parsley.
- Planting starts indoor or in green house: seed flats of cole crops (cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli).
- In Western Oregon, where soil is dry enough and workable, plant garden peas, sweet peas, and lettuce.

