



STRAW BALE GARDENING

Message from the Go Green Committee:

Welcome to the MHMS school garden!

This garden is an **interactive learning center** for **all** the students of MHMS. Through **actively** participating in growing, harvesting, eating and composting organic fruits and vegetables, students will have an opportunity to have hands on experiences with biology, ecology, math, social sciences and more.

The garden is a reflection of our students and will have a diverse group of plants. We will include Native American plants, and plants used in the cooking of American, Asian and Indian food. This garden is made possible by parent volunteers and we will need more parents as the plants start growing.

The Go Green Committee decided to utilize a straw bale gardening method*. This unique method of gardening provides a natural way of farming which virtually eliminates weeds and bugs and is cost-efficient. The bales are first allowed to start decomposing by keeping them wet and then a natural nitrogen-rich fertilizer is added. The vegetables will be planted in a small amount of soil along the top of the bales. The bales will eventually decompose and be used as compost for the next planting.

We are looking forward to creating a bountiful garden.

A big THANK YOU to PUMPKIN PATCH AT FREMONT HUB for donating bales!

*What is a straw bale garden?

A straw or hay bale garden is a gardening method used for raising vegetables, herbs, and flowers directly on a bale. Straw or hay bales from alfalfa, wheat, oats, rye, or other cereals are suitable for making a garden bed. Straw bales are preferable over hay because hay bales contain more weed and grass seeds. The bale should be tight and held together with 2-3 strands of plastic baling twine—preferably made from a biodegradable material such as jute and sisal. Biodegradable twines should be positioned parallel to the ground to avoid their hastened decomposition.

Advantages

- Bales are about 2 feet tall, which makes gardening more accessible for gardeners who have difficulty bending over. The bales are not permanent and are usually removed at the end of the season.
- Used bales can be used as mulch, added to a compost pile, or spread on the ground to enrich the soil.
- No digging or soil preparation is required, a big advantage if you have hard or rocky soil or if you live in an area where soils may be contaminated with heavy metals.
- Bales can be placed on concrete or asphalt paving.
- Bales are an inexpensive way to create raised beds for gardening.

How fun! Each class can help by planting the bales with Pockets or 'holes' method.

Planting Methods

Straw bales should be ready for planting 3 to 4 weeks after conditioning begins. Create pockets about 3 to 4 inches deep by loosening and removing a small amount of the straw and filling each hole with growing medium. The number of pockets will vary, depending on what crops you intend to grow and the spacing needed for those crops. It takes about 10-15 minutes to make 4 pockets on a straw bale.

MHMS GO GREEN COMMITTEE

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

The growing medium can be a mix of a well-rotted, good quality compost, soil, aged manure, and other nutrient rich materials. The growing medium is needed to create a suitable rooting environment for successful production on the bale beds. Approximately 1 lb of growing medium is needed to fill each pocket. Once the growing medium is in place, moisten the medium and the bales.

Garden Management



- Watering
- Fertilization
- Weed Control
- Insect Control

*Excerpts from
Washington State
University Extension
Fact Sheet • FS109E

2014 WINTER

NOVEMBER

- ✓ Nov 15th, Clean-up day
- ✓ Move the bales into place
- ✓ Make compost bin
- ✓ Develop compost program: In Progress
- Grant writing: In Progress

2015

JANUARY

- Condition Bales
- Jan 31st, Show & Tell at MHMS Open House

FEBRUARY

- Feb 7th, Garden Opening (*tentative*)
- Plant for Spring

SPRING

- Harvest
- Plant for Summer

SUMMER

- Harvest
- Plant for Fall

FALL

- Harvest
- Plant for Winter



**THERE WAS A
GREAT TURNOUT,
FROM YOUNG TO
THOSE YOUNG AT
HEART!**



Thanks for all that
came to help!

- Thanks for the Go Green Committee for planning this action packed event!

- Thank you PTO for the pizza!

- A big shout out of Thanks to Robert for clearing out the debris and taking out the rose bushes!



HEALTHY GARDENING TIPS



A big THANK YOU to Catherine Middleton-Hardie and Tony Hardie for making a COMPOST box from scratch for our school garden!



*** Make sure you protect yourself from the sun, even on cloudy days.**

*** Wear a hat and sunscreen and some shades.**

OTHER RELATED GREEN NEWS & UPDATES

❖ FROM UNION CITY RECYCLING, ORGANICS & WASTE NEWS

During the five weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, household waste increases by more than 25% according to the US EPA. This includes three times more food waste than at other times of the year.

- For parties, use **cloth napkins** and **reusable** dishes, glasses and silverware. Or use compostable items that can be commercially composted by the City Waste contractor.
- Recycle all plastic, aluminum, and unsoiled paper & cardboard items.
- Plan holiday meals to have only as many **leftovers** as you and your family can actually eat.
- Place food scraps, food-soiled paper products (plates, cups & napkins) in **the green organics cart** so they can be composted rather than sent to the landfill.
- Wrap gifts in **recycled or reused wrapping paper**. Remember to save or recycle used wrapping paper.
- While out shopping, remember to **bring reusable shopping bags** along. Reusable shopping bags also make a great gift.

Ideas to reduce waste this holiday season Be on Santa's "Nice" list!

❖ THANKSGIVING FEAST - WASTE STREAM SEPARATION

At the school Thanksgiving feast on Friday 21st November, the PTO Go Green Committee introduced **separated waste stream collection**. Food scraps were collected for composting in the school compost heap, and plastic bottles and cutlery were collected for recycling. The plastic bottles will be recycled by the PTO for the CRV and help support the new school garden.

As the pilot event was so successful, separated waste stream collection will be implemented for future feasts and fun nights. Parent and student support to practice recycling and green waste diversion is encouraged and appreciated.

Before:-Area-cleared-up → → → → After:-Strawbales-set-up



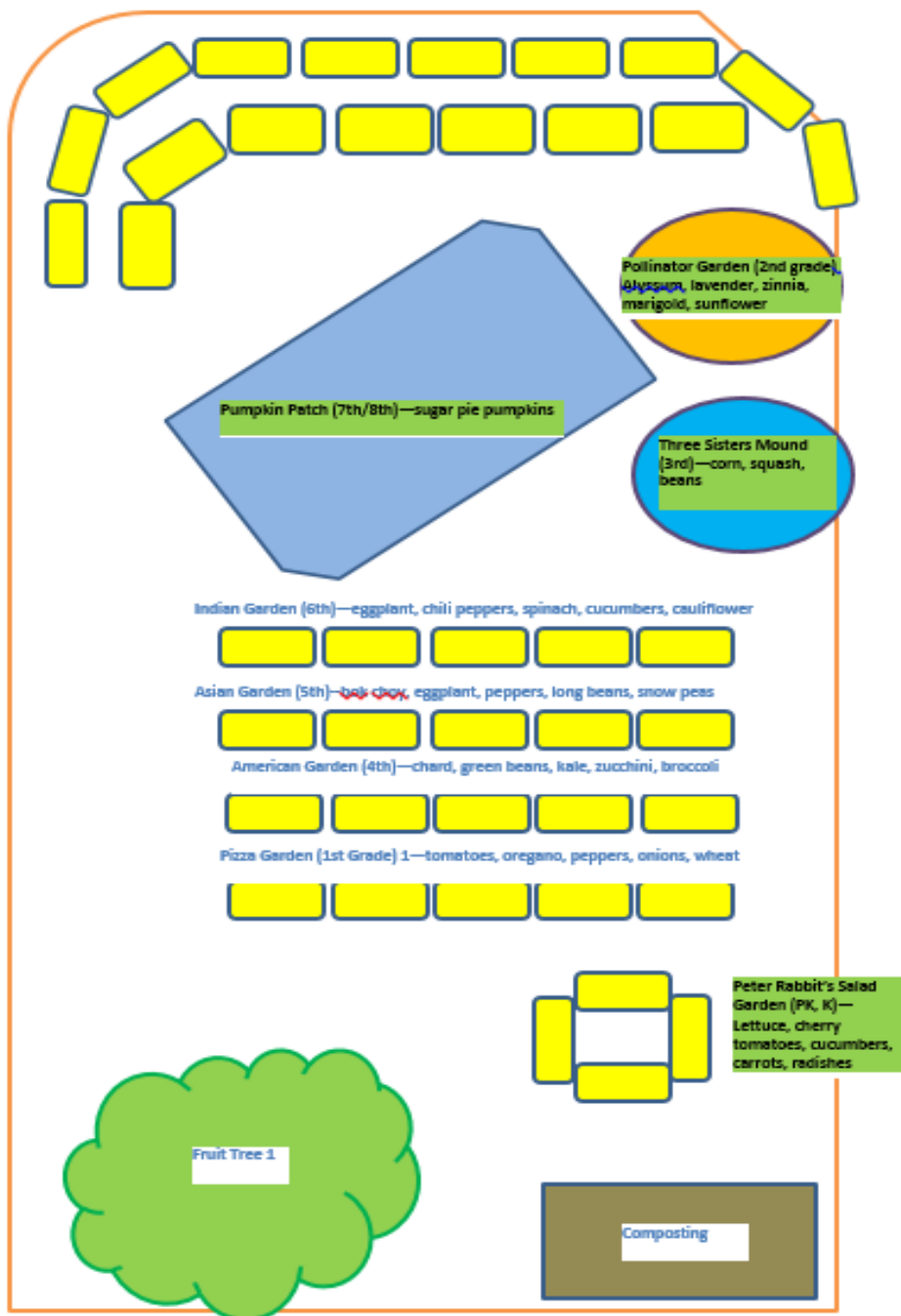
Go Green Committee and the Clean Up Crew!



Special thanks to Mr. Robert (who cleared up the space) and to Ms. Shyno, Ms. Kathie, Ms. Catherine, Ms. Mycile, Ms. Cavanaugh, Mr. Lee, Ms. Julie, Mrs. Allender and for all those that came to help, donate food and supplies. We couldn't have done it without you!

OUR SCHOOL GARDEN LAYOUT

SAVE YOUR MILK CARTONS & YOGURT CUPS!



We are lucky to have a master gardener in our Go Green committee! Thank you **Kathie Chapell** for providing the wisdom and guidance on this endeavor.

1. Help us sell plants during grand opening.

We have the opportunity to sell the plants we're starting in the classrooms. There is about 500 seeds = 500 plants. Our garden does not have the capacity for 500 plants. So, they can be sold for \$1/each at the grand opening to parents and community members. Proceeds will help fund the school garden moving forward.

2. To ensure we have plants to sell, we **will need lots of milk cartons and yogurt cups** to get this thing started. Please drop off empty and clean yogurt cups and half-and-half containers. We can provide a box by the lobby area. Thanks!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Got an idea about how to enrich our gardening community? How would you like your class to participate? Have ideas on how to make our school environment more sustainable?

Sign up for the Go Green Committee!

CONTACT US: GOGREEN.MHMS@GMAIL.COM