

## *Gardens for Kids L.A.* **Program Procedures**

### **School Selection**

Schools interested in joining the Gardens for Kids L.A. program should submit an application to the Environmental Affairs Department. Applications are mailed to all schools eligible for LAUSD's Nutrition Network program (greater than 50% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch program) as well as being available on the website. Depending on response, applications are again mailed to schools citywide or within targeted areas. Schools interested in starting a gardening program are asked to assemble a garden team consisting of at least one administrator, two teachers, and one parent.

Schools are evaluated in the order the applications are received. Participants are chosen for the Gardens for Kids L.A. program based upon several criteria, including their need, readiness, and location. Need is determined through the percentage of students on the free or reduced lunch program. Readiness is based upon whether or not a garden site is available and a team of teachers, administrators, and parents has been assembled. To ensure citywide distribution, the location of each participating school is also taken into consideration.

Each school is visited by a Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LACC) program coordinator to determine if they are a good fit for the program. Locations for the garden beds are examined and the schools are assisted in selecting the most appropriate area based on accessibility, amount of sunshine, availability of nearby water, and resolution of any security issues that need to be addressed. The raised beds for this program must be placed on a hard surface, rather than open soil, to eliminate the possibility of soil contamination. If all these requirements are met, the school can be included in the program. Letters are then sent to each school, addressed to the principal with copies to each member of the garden team, formally accepting them into the Gardens for Kids L.A. program. A Program Guide is included with this letter to give additional information about the program and a list of resources that are available to the schools.

### **Construction**

Once a school has been accepted into the Gardens for Kids L.A. program, construction can proceed. LACC schedules the construction, which generally takes place in one day. The LACC crew can assist the students with planting the beds if desired. Instruction is given as to the proper way to plant seeds and seedlings and the basic requirements of their new garden. By the end of the day, the school has a new garden. EAD visits each school to deliver and hang the Gardens for Kids L.A. banner and answer any questions they may have about the program. EAD can also visit classrooms to help the students grow their own seedlings by planting seeds in peat pellets. EAD staff discusses what plants need to grow and how recycling relates to the gardens.

### **Partner Interaction**

EAD's partners in the Gardens for Kids L.A. program are LACC, Los Angeles Unified School District Nutrition Network, University of California Cooperative Extension

Common Ground Garden Program, and California Integrated Waste Management Board. EAD holds partners meetings, generally monthly, to discuss the progress of the program and resolve any problems that arise. EAD also keeps partners informed between meetings by e-mailing any updates.

### **Additional Funding**

Each of the partners looks for additional funding for the Gardens for Kids L.A. program. EAD looks for grant opportunities that the department or one of the partners is eligible to apply for to expand the program to more schools or into new directions. Examples include the SB332 grant funds that enabled a recycling component to be added to the program. These funds pay for the recycled plastic lumber from which the raised garden bins are built as well as recycling bins and outreach materials for the participating schools.

### **Continuing Interaction**

A database is maintained of all schools that are in the Gardens for Kids L.A. program so that on-going contact can be maintained. This interaction has included the Salad Bowl Challenge contest, seedling giveaways, and the introduction of the recycling element to the program.