Here at City Schoolyard Garden (CSG) we have a vision: that young people thrive with the opportunity to engage with nature, to enhance their academic learning through hands-on experience, and to cultivate skills for healthy living and youth leadership.

Last year we had 582 volunteers who helped us maintain the gardens, host garden activities, prepare and distribute healthy snacks to Charlottesville City School students, and overall make it a successful year of youth gardening!

In this handbook, we hope to give you some insight about:

- City Schoolyard Garden values and guidelines
- How to volunteer effectively and safely
- A map of our garden locations
- How you can join the great work through volunteering
About City Schoolyard Garden

City Schoolyard Garden cultivates academic achievement, health, environmental stewardship, and community engagement through garden-based, experiential learning and leadership development for Charlottesville youth. We do this by employing 6 core strategies:

- Educating and engaging youth
- Integrating garden-based learning
- Engaging community and collaborating with partners
- Building capacity and equity
- Cultivating sustainability (both environment and program-based)
- Continually strengthening our organization

We currently manage eight schoolyard gardens including one at all six Charlottesville public elementary schools, Buford Middle School, and Charlottesville High School. Together, these gardens encompass over 26,383 square feet of diverse organic gardens with over 27,000 student interactions for over 3,500 youth each year.

We believe in leadership and strength-based engagement with youth and strive to support and use the talents of each student to create a successful environment in our programming without punishment. The purpose of the City Schoolyard Garden youth leadership approach is to build confident, engaged and healthy youth. The strategies we implement in working towards this include:

- creating spaces for youth authenticity and self-identity.
- cultivating youth knowledge of small-scale organic growing techniques.
- engaging youth in leadership roles and decision-making for the CSG gardens.
- developing skills for working successfully both independently and in teams.
- building job skills, leadership characteristics and opportunities for youth.
- understanding systemic issues in our food system, their impact on our community and engaging youth in becoming change agents.

Creating a Place for Youth to Thrive

Our gardens are places where students feel safe and welcome and can shine as leaders. There is a lot that goes into creating a space where this happens. We view students as smart, competent and capable people with many strengths. All students of any age have a place in the garden where they can thrive. We relay this information through actions and words whenever we can.

When talking to Students

- Praise students’ success. There are many opportunities for this, take advantage of opportunities to recognize positive situations.
- Give students choices to build autonomy. Would you rather dig in the compost or move the wheelbarrows?
• Allow the garden time to also be team-building time. Being with friends and chatting while we work is integral to project-based learning.
• Consider garden production as secondary to the garden experience. While we want to teach youth the proper way to sow a seed or harvest a crop, these skills are secondary to the positive experience of being in a garden, trying something new, failing and trying again.
• Approach communication of student behaviors with clear expectations and, when possible, highlighting of strengths. *You are putting a lot of strength behind swinging that tool – let’s use that strength to keep the spade on the ground on not in the air.*

**Things to avoid**

• Jokes and comments that could be perceived as mocking, degrading, risqué or can create discomfort
• Using terms like “Baby”, “Sweetie”, “Honey”, or other suggestive names
• Discussing your own or students’ personal life with participants unless directly related and necessary to the activity at hand
• Contacting youth outside of your duties with the organization (this includes social media). Adults should not “friend” youth on personal accounts. Use only official organization social media for communications between adults and youth.

**Student Safety**

Students and staff/volunteers need the garden/CSG to be a place where they feel safe.

**Ways to do this:**

• Personal space is important and physical contact can be discomforting to students. If you want to touch a shoulder, give a hug, give a handshake, ask first and accept an answer as truth. Avoid use of contact that can be perceived as intimacy (holding hands, kissing, sitting on lap, etc.) and never use physical contact as punishment (forcing student to hold your hand, corporal punishment, etc.)
• If private conversation is required, consider requiring that the child and adult may move out of earshot of others, but not out of sight. This precaution helps to protect the adult from possible false allegations of abuse, as well as protecting the child.
• Youth are not permitted to ride with volunteers unless the volunteer has undergone CSG staff/consultant screening and training.
Locations and Addresses

City Schoolyard Garden
Plant. Grow. Harvest.

Buford Middle School
1000 Cherry Avenue
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Clark Elementary
1000 Belmont Avenue
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Johnson Elementary School
1645 Cherry Avenue
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Burnley-Moran Elementary School
1300 Long Street
Charlottesville, VA 22901

Greensbrier Elementary
2738 Greensbrier Drive
Charlottesville, VA 22901

Venable Elementary School
406 14th Street NW
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Charlottesville High School
1400 Melbourne Road
Charlottesville, VA 22901

Jackson-Via Elementary School
508 Harris Road
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Walker Upper-Elementary School
1564 Dairy Road
Charlottesville, VA 22903
How Can We Use Your Help?

Harvest of the Month
Once a month we supply a fresh, local snack to over 3,000 students in the Charlottesville City Schools. The day before Harvest of the Month, we spend time preparing the produce for distribution. This could be washing apples, slicing peppers, roasting asparagus, or baking cornbread from local grains! It’s great working with all of the fresh produce knowing that it is going to nourish the Charlottesville students the next day!

Workdays
Is your school/club looking to get a few community service hours in? Maybe your workplace is looking for a team building activity for staff. CSG gardens can host 10-20 people in a workday making them a great option to meet your volunteering goals. It’s a fun time and an awesome opportunity to see the difference a few hours can make in a garden!

Direct Student Engagement
Due to the nature of our work, this is most often what people are interested in, but also what is most difficult to accommodate with volunteers. During special events (such as Harvest of the Month), there are times that you will engage with students, and it’s important to remember that CCS students are the center of our work. Any work you put into CSG cultivates academic achievement, health, environmental stewardship, and community engagement in our youth.

Events and Celebrations
From our Annual Fall Harvest Festival to Farm-to-School week, we have many opportunities to get engaged if you aren’t able to volunteer on a regular basis.

Office Support
CSG is always in need of organizational support as well. We are always looking for graphic design support, web design, stuffing envelopes, filing, entering evaluation data, hosting outreach tables, planning events and many additional office support needs.
Safety and Success

Here is a list of some dos-and-don’ts of the garden and volunteering with CSG:

**DO:**
- ✓ Bring plenty of water. The garden can get hot!
- ✓ Apply sunscreen before coming to the garden
- ✓ Wear close-toed, comfortable shoes and weather appropriate clothing
- ✓ REST AS NEEDED! Some of the work can get strenuous. Take breaks as needed so you don’t overwork yourself
- ✓ Use shovels, rakes, wheelbarrows, etc. properly to prevent injuries to your back
- ✓ HAVE A GOOD TIME!

**DON’T:**
- ✓ Wear “good clothes”—they could get ruined (trust us—we’ve learned this the hard way)
- ✓ Try to lift heavy loads by yourself
- ✓ Be afraid to ask for help—we don’t want anyone hurt

How to Contact Us

Jeanette Abi-Nader - Executive Director  
email: jeanette@cityschoolyardgarden.org  
phone: (434) 260-3274

Jordan Johnson - Volunteer Coordinator  
email: volunteer@cityschoolyardgarden.org  
phone: (434) 260-3275

Find us online:  
www.cityschoolyardgarden.org  
www.facebook.com/CitySchoolyardGarden  
Instagram: City Schoolyard Garden

Postal Address:  
PO Box 5282  
Charlottesville, VA, 22905
VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT AND RELEASE FROM LIABILITY

1. I agree to work for City Schoolyard Garden as a volunteer and, as a volunteer, I understand that I will not be compensated for any time spent volunteering, nor am I entitled to benefits, including employment insurance benefits upon the termination of this agreement or as a result of this service.

2. I am aware that participation as a volunteer may require periods of standing, lifting and carrying up to 40 pounds, and a wide range of potentially abnormal and/or repetitive physical activity such as squatting, kneeling, pulling, pushing, chopping, and other gardening, food preparation and/or construction activities that will require the exercise of reasonable care to avoid injury. I am voluntarily participating in this activity with knowledge of the hazards and potential dangers involved, and agree to accept any and all risks of personal injury and property damage.

3. As consideration for volunteering for City Schoolyard Garden (CSG), I hereby agree that I, and my assignees, heirs, guardians, and legal representatives, will not make a claim against or sue CSG or its employees, agents or contractors for injury or damage resulting from the negligence, whether active or passive, or other acts, however caused, by any of its officers, employees, agents, or contractors of CSG as a result of my volunteering. I HEREBY RELEASE AND DISCHARGE CITY SCHOOLYARD GARDEN AND ITS OFFICERS, EMPLOYEES, AGENTS AND CONTRACTORS FROM ALL ACTIONS, CLAIMS, OR DEMANDS THAT I, MY HEIRS, GUARDIANS, AND LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES NOW HAVE, OR MAY HAVE IN THE FUTURE, FOR INJURY OR DAMAGE RESULTING FROM MY PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT.

4. I UNDERSTAND THAT IF I AM INJURED IN THE COURSE OF ANY VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY, I AM NOT COVERED BY CITY SCHOOLYARD GARDEN’s WORKERS’ COMPENSATION PROGRAM. I authorize CSG to seek emergency medical treatment on my behalf in case of injury, accident or illness to me arising from my involvement as a volunteer. I understand that I will be responsible for medical costs incurred by such accident, illness or injury.

5. I understand that the materials and tools provided by CSG are and remain the property of CSG and I agree to return these tools and any remaining materials to CSG at the end of my volunteer service.

6. I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THIS AGREEMENT AND FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS CONTENTS. I AM AWARE THAT THIS IS A RELEASE OF LIABILITY, AND BY VOLUNTEERING FOR CSG, I AGREE TO THESE TERMS OF MY OWN FREE WILL.

If volunteer is under 18 years of age, parent or guardian must read and agree to the following:

This release, its significance, and assumption of risk have been explained to and are understood by the minor.