

SCHOOL GARDENS PRIMARY SOURCE SET

mnhs.org/iium/sets/school-gardens

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first school yard garden was started in 1891 in Massachusetts. Gardens were seen as a way to give youth in urban areas something to do and stay out of trouble. The focus on moral development of children was a key point of focus for these gardens. School gardens grew as more students were enrolled in schools after child labor laws were enforced.

WWI led to families and students to join in growing Victory Gardens also known as war gardens or liberty gardens, for the war effort. Grants were given out for schools and families to grow food in gardens to ward off the fear of food shortages. During WWII students were encouraged to join the "U.S. Garden Army." As the war ended and funding for gardens stopped, and the advent of activities like scouts and camps geared for children increased, these gardens declined.

In the 1970s as more families moved to the suburbs, gardening became more of a focus. Families and educators who feared students were losing connections with nature started gardens at home and school. This shift occurred as food prices were increasing and environmental awareness was growing, giving students a sense of purpose in being outdoors: they could grow their own food and help protect the environment.

RESOURCES

Community of Gardens (article, Smithsonian Institution):

<https://communityofgardens.si.edu/exhibits/show/historycommunitygardens/schoolgardens>

School Gardens (research guide, Library of Congress):

<https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/journey/schoolgardens.html>

School Gardens (article and sources, National Agricultural Library):

<https://www.nal.usda.gov/collections/stories/school-gardens>