What Every Garden Needs

**SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT**

**General Tools**

**Outdoors**
- Trowels (enough to match the number of kids you expect to have in the garden at one time)
- Spading forks (2-3)
- Shovels (1-2)
- Metal garden rakes (2-3)
- Garden hose (long enough to reach entire garden)
- Hose spray nozzle
- Watering cans
- Label stakes
- Marker pens
- Scissors

**Indoors**
- Milk cartons
- Planting flats
- Planting cells
- Grow lights
- Watering devices for plant starts (small watering cans, cups, maybe even an old teapot!)

**Mulch**

Some sort of ground protection can be extremely useful for both moisture retention and weed control. Mulches are preferred because they decompose eventually, adding much-needed nutrients to the garden. Here are some suggestions for mulching materials:
- Chopped or composted leaves obtained from city leaf dumps.
- Grass clippings from unsprayed lawns.
- Newspaper and cardboard work well but should be weighted down so as to not blow around the garden.
- Straw. However, take care to find very clean oat or barley straw, as hay is often filled with weed seeds.

Avoid: Using wood chips for annual gardens, since decomposing wood steals much-needed nitrogen from the soil.
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**Plant Protectors**
Young transplants may be very tender at planting time (especially when grown indoors in classrooms or under grow lights) and need protection from late frosts or strong winds. Some older plants also need a little extra protection from dangers such as insect damage. Here are some ideas for keeping your plants safe:

**Milk Jugs**
You can collect plastic milk jugs throughout the year, enough to place one over each pepper or tomato transplant for the first week or two after planting. Cut the bottom out of the jugs and place over each plant, nestling firmly into the ground. Be careful in hot weather, however, as these jugs (even though the caps are off) may get too hot for plants!

**Drain Tile**
Cut 1ft. sections from 4in. diameter black plastic drain tile. Press these sections into the dirt around each plant. These will not get as hot as milk cartons and will be adequate for wind protection, but they may not protect as well against frost.

**Row Cover Material**
This spun polyester material, often sold as Remay, comes in rolls of various widths and can be found at nurseries, garden supply stores, and in catalogues. Row covers help protect certain crops from insect damage, especially flea beetles on brassicas and eggplant and cucumber beetles on seedlings of squash, melons, and cucumbers. Some sort of metal hoops to support the covers can be created from stiff wire, perhaps reformed coat hangers if necessary. (See “Extending the Season” for more detailed information.) If using row cover for insect protection, use a lighter gauge so plants can still get adequate light.

**Fertilizers**
Animal manure and compost are the best options for maintaining garden fertility. However, each should be used with caution, as noted below.

Inorganic fertilizers are available in both liquid and pellet forms if nutrients, especially nitrogen, cannot be found in a clean, local, or affordable organic form.

**Manure (Composted)**
Manure can often contain weed seeds, so it is important to know what went into it. If using farm manure, inquire as to the type of animal feed used. Manure from organically fed animals is the safest option, as animals are often fed with hay that has been sprayed with chemicals that persist in manure and can endanger many vegetable crops. Manure should be applied to the garden at least 120 days before the crops will be harvested.

**Compost**
Garden compost rarely gets hot enough to kill weed and garden plant seeds, so it is important to know what went into it. If you decide to make your own compost, be sure that it meets safe composting guidelines outlined in the “Composting” section of this guide.