# Sustainable Gardening – Outdoor Learning Environments for Texas Schools

# Tips to remember before starting a program for Teachers, Parents, and Volunteers

In 1991, the Texas Legislature passed a law requiring that pests in and around school buildings be managed using integrated pest management. This is one of the first laws in the U.S. requiring schools to implement integrated pest management (IPM) as part of their maintenance programs. In 2007, the Legislature updated the laws defining regulatory guidelines more definitively. Under these IPM program guidelines, the school district must have an IPM policy statement, a designated IPM coordinator and follow strict guidelines when applying any type of pesticide. Only licensed pesticide applicators can make any type of pesticide application, this includes products deemed organic. In addition to having a licensed pesticide applicator, any applications made outdoors on school grounds requires posting signs placed in the area at the time of treatment and the signs are to remain in place for 4 hours after the treatment has been completed.

* The Teacher (or school employee responsible for the garden) should contact the school district’s IPM coordinator.
  + You can contact the Superintendent’s office, Maintenance Dept or the TX Department of Agriculture to find out who your coordinator is. TDA Contact Maron Finley [Maron.Finley@TexasAgriculture.gov](mailto:Maron.Finley@TexasAgriculture.gov)
  + DFW Area IPM Coordinators
    - Dallas ISD – Craig Dennie 972-925-5325
    - Ft. Worth ISD – Faustino Zamarripa 817-781-3817
    - Plano ISD – David Lewis 469-752-1597
    - Frisco – Noel Nixon 469-633-6050
    - Carrollton-Farmers Branch – Victor Melton 972-968-6303
    - Denton – Bill Knight 940-369-0216
    - Richardson - Ng’Arge Shaw 214-476-0270
* The meeting with the IPM Coordinator should include the following
  + Discussion of a suitable site for the garden/outdoor learning environment
    - Remember this is not a 1 year commitment – your responsibly to this project should be explained to the Coordinator, the Maintenance Department and district.
    - Have knowledge of school building plans – are you putting the learning environment in a place that will be a portable building location the following year
    - Think water, sun, shade, bus schedules, etc. Where you place your garden is the most important step you can make
      * Ask the coordinator the following:
        + Products used for fire ants – are there any pesticide label restrictions on planting certain types of plants
        + Products used to control weeds – when was the last application, any restrictions on what and when to plant
  + Think cost – most school districts do not have a budget to prepare a garden area – be willing to ask for help to find resources
    - Visit with the IPM coordinator about design plans. Plans should be easy to implement and not conflict with current IPM practices
* Teacher training
  + Work with AgriLife Extension Agent, IPM Coordinator, or another trainer on learning how to document any type of pesticide application. Pesticides include everything but fertilizer; if you mean to kill a bug or weed it’s considered a pesticide.
    - Keeping detailed records (see attached record)

*Note before doing any pesticide treatments at your campus, please remember to talk to the IPM Coordinator.*

* + - * Date, time and location where treatments are applied
      * Name of pesticide used and EPA Reg. # (even if you don’t use a chemical – keeping track of what you do in the garden is a good idea)
      * Total amount of product used (#of lbs., gals, oz. etc)
      * Device used and total # of devices (bird netting to keep birds out, copper bands to keep slugs out, etc.)
      * For any product that you mix with water or other surfactant, what is the mixing rate?
      * Purpose for why you are using a treatment
      * Who made the application
    - Reporting pest problems
      * Discussion for IPM coordinator – how does YOUR district want to handle this
    - Posting area prior to pesticide application and keeping students off area
      * Discussion for IPM coordinator – who will be responsible for this you the teacher, the principal, the head custodian, or the IPM coordinator.
* Pesticide applications
  + The state of Texas is very specific about who can apply pesticides on school and child care campuses – only licenses pesticide applicators with the Texas Department of Agriculture [www.texasagriculture.gov](http://www.texasagriculture.gov) can make these applications. For more information about how to obtain a license go here for more information. <http://schoolipm.tamu.edu/pesticide-applicator-information/>
  + Only EPA registered products can be used on school property – no home remedies
  + Detailed application use records must be kept and filed with the School districts IPM Coordinator (see attached record)
  + Prior to doing any outdoor pesticide application the area shall be posted notifying people that the area has been treated and must remain undisturbed for 4 hours for Caution Signal worded(found on the pesticide label) products and 8 hours for Warning or Danger Signal worded(found on the pesticide label) products.