

VOLUNTEERS IN YOUR GARDEN TO TABLE PROGRAMME



Garden to Table is a great way to involve your community in your school. Everyone benefits from the help and expertise that people from all walks of life bring to the table...and garden!

Volunteers are an integral part of Garden to Table. They work closely with small groups of children to answer questions, encourage, monitor and oversee activities, while keeping the children on track with tasks. Volunteers can be parents, caregivers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or next-door-neighbours - anyone from within your school or local community who is keen to contribute their time and enthusiasm. No special skills are needed, other than an interest in Garden to Table and the desire to work with children.

Volunteers will want to work at your school for different reasons. They may:

- Have children or grandchildren at the school and want to be involved
- Have heard about Garden to Table and decided they want to contribute
- Have friends who volunteer and want to work alongside them
- Want to be involved in the community more and meet new people
- Want to get some work experience

Keep these reasons in mind when advertising and recruiting your volunteers.

Types of Volunteers

You may want to consider asking for volunteers for short-term, one-off projects, or a longer-term commitment to help regularly during Garden to Table sessions. Both types of volunteers contribute enormously to the success of your Garden to Table programme.

Regular Volunteers for the Garden & Kitchen sessions

Most schools will need regular volunteers to work alongside children whilst gardening and cooking. Before appointing volunteers to help during sessions, we suggest you give some thought to the numbers needed and how they might be used. Ideally, each volunteer will work with a small group of 4 - 5 children, so numbers will depend on the number of children participating and how many sessions need to be covered each week. Some volunteers may prefer to work in the garden, others in the kitchen.

Other ways your volunteers may help with your GTT programme

Project Workers: Organising and helping with one-off projects such as cleaning, painting, building garden beds etc. This is particularly helpful at the beginning of a project, or during the summer holidays. Local businesses are often keen to help as a team-building activity for their staff.

Fundraising: Working in consultation with the Principal or PTA.

Volunteer Coordinator: Managing, coordinating and communicating with the other volunteers.

Advertising for Volunteers

You may need to actively advertise for volunteers, and there are number of places you can go to when you start your volunteer recruitment drive. When advertising, be aware that not everyone has access to the internet, so avoid relying solely on the website and social media pages to reach your potential volunteers.



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School Community

The first place to look for volunteers is within your school community. Put a call out to families asking for help with the programme. You can invite parents and caregivers to a morning tea at school to talk more about Garden to Table, its aims and objectives. If the classes have already started then show them a class in action (this is the best way to get people hooked in!). Think about placing an advert for volunteers to target your school community in the school newsletter, on the school's facebook page, website or blog or the school noticeboard.

Wider Community

You can also target specific community groups in your area. Garden to Table schools have had some success by approaching the following types of groups and organisations:

- Local retirement villages.
- University or polytechnic volunteer groups.
- Organisations such as the Lions Clubs, Rotary, Men's Sheds, Country Women's Institutes, Rural Women NZ. Local iwi organisations, environmental organisations and community gardens are also good places to look for volunteers. Consider placing an ad in your local newspaper, on a community noticeboard (e.g. in your local library or supermarkets), an online community noticeboard or on a radio community noticeboard.

Corporate Groups

Utilising the corporate volunteer workforce is likely to be most useful for large projects or working bees. Kitchens can be painted, gardens started, native tree planting undertaken or seedling preparation for large scale plant propagation (for fundraising) are the type of things a large group may come and do in a day. You may like to approach businesses in your area or register your interest with Garden to Table. We are often approached by businesses looking for volunteer opportunities.

What to Include in Your Advertisement

When advertising be clear about:

- What you need volunteers for, the times needed, hours required and regularity.
- What a difference their help will make and what the rewards are.
- Who they should contact for more details or where they can go for more information.

There are advertising templates available on the GTT website. Consider inviting potential volunteers to observe a Garden to Table session. This is a non-threatening way for potential volunteers to see the programme in action before they commit, and they can also use this time to talk to other volunteers about their experiences. Watching the children enjoying Garden to Table is the best advertisement.

Ensure you follow up quickly when someone shows an interest in becoming a volunteer. They will be pleased to see they are needed and that the programme is run efficiently.

Looking After Your Volunteers

Once you have some volunteers assisting with your Garden to Table programme it is important to look after them so they continue to support you. Communication is key for this. Appoint someone to be the Volunteer Coordinator and make sure you have a way of getting in touch with your volunteers to let them know about scheduling changes to sessions or other relevant information. Thanking your volunteers is also important so make sure to do this every session.

For more information on Recruiting, Managing and Thanking volunteers see the Volunteer Guide on the Volunteer tab of the resources on the Garden to Table website.

