

15 Maine Schools Receive Over 4,000 Seedlings with ReTreeUS' Back to School Garden Program

A 2021 USDA Farm to School Turnkey Grant will enable ReTreeUS' Back to School Garden program to be implemented in 10 schools throughout the state of Maine. This program solves major issues confronting school gardens, especially summer maintenance, while increasing productivity to generate abundant harvests for cafeterias and maximizing garden learning opportunities. ReTreeUS is also utilizing funding from Hannaford and other sources to be able to reach a total of 15 schools.

A [step by step guide](#) can be found on the ReTreeUS website. The Back to School Garden approach aligns school gardens with the school calendar by making well-established, cold-hardy vegetable seedlings sourced from local farms available to the schools in the fall. Preparation for this gardening technique starts in the spring when "sheet-mulch" garden beds using paper and compost that will eliminate weeds and increase fertility over the summer.

Collaborators on this effort include Maine Agriculture in the Classroom (MAITC), Maine School Garden Network (MSGN), Independent Retailers Shared Services Cooperative (IRSSC) and Coast of Maine. MAITC is leading educational workshops and providing tailored curriculum kits full of resources. Seedlings were grown by Wolfe's Neck Center and Mountain Heartbeet Farm.

Videos about the program: [Back to School Garden Program With ReTreeUs](#) & [Creating a Back to School Garden](#)

The schools benefiting from the program include: Atwood Primary School, Auburn Middle School, Captain Albert Stevens School, Connors Elementary School, Ellsworth Middle School, Hollis Elementary School, Indian Township School, Lee Academy, Lewiston High School, Manchester School, Park Avenue Elementary School, Thomaston Grammar School, Walker Elementary School, Wentworth School and Williams Elementary School.

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