SCHOOL GARDENS: IN HELPING THE CHILDREN THE NATION PROFITS: BY WALTER A. DYER

OHN SPENCER said: "When a farm boy carried wood for the kitchen stove, wood was a bore; carrying ball-bats for a game down on the flats was a privilege eagerly sought. Stove-wood and ball-bats may have come from the same tree. The man is an alchemist who is able to place the same halo about stove-wood duties that he finds in ball-bat pleasures." The promoters of school gardens are alchemists of this sort. They are teaching children the fun there is in working for specific results. They have cast the spirit of competition, of a game, into garden tasks; they have made a play of work. This teaching of the joy of accomplishment, this injection of enthusiasm into work, is bound to produce far-reaching effects on the national life of the future.

For there is a psychological truth at the bottom of all this. The brain has a distinct motor faculty that must be trained if the proper balance is to be maintained in education. It is this truth that is at the bottom of all manual training and solid instruction. To make the hands willing and competent servants of the brain is to develop self-reliance and the sense of responsibility. And it is training in the highest degree practical and useful.

But gardening for children goes farther than this. It produces that contact with the soil, that comprehension of the source of our national wealth, that makes good citizens and happier, more normal men and women. The chief propaganda of the School Garden Association of America is "to lead the people to realize that their little children must be brought more directly and continuously into contact with Mother Earth to be properly educated," in fact that they can get a good deal of schooling in a garden.

Especially in the cities, where ordinarily this contact is denied to thousands of future citizens of the republic, the school garden meets the need, and as soon as our educators realize the importance of it the movement will sweep the country.

"The school garden's popularity and growth," writes Mrs. A. L. Livermore, vice-president of the Fairview Garden School Association of Yonkers, New York, "are accounted for in many ways, but chiefly because of its rare combination of essential educational qualities. It is a happy mingling of play and work, vacation and school, athletics and manual training, pleasure and business, beauty and utility, head and hand, freedom and responsibility, of corrective andpreventive, constructive and creative influences, and all in the great school of
GETTING EDUCATION IN A GARDEN

out of doors. It is a corrective of the evils of the schoolroom. It is a preventive of the perils of misspent leisure. It is conducive to character building. It is creative of industrious, honest producers. In fact, there is no child’s nature to which it does not in some way make a natural and powerful appeal.”

THE school-garden movement, though it had its beginnings in this country only twenty-three years ago, is much older in Europe, whence the idea spread to America. As long ago as eighteen hundred and sixty-nine Austria decreed that every rural school should have an experimental garden attached to it. A similar system is in operation in Norway and Sweden. Belgium has a compulsory course in horticulture in the elementary schools. France requires every public school to maintain flower and vegetable gardens, an orchard, forestry plot and apiary, and Russia, in a lesser degree, does the same. More recently Germany, Switzerland and England have made school gardens a part of the educational system. At the present time Berlin has a large school garden outside the city with a plot for every child who applies. Canada, too, has been progressive in this line, the Macdonald Institute at Guelph, Ontario, having the finest equipment in the world for teaching nature study and school gardening.

Boston was the pioneer in the school-garden movement in the United States. The first one was instituted in eighteen hundred and ninety-one by Henry M. Clapp, master of the George Putnam School at Roxbury, Massachusetts. For a number of years, however, this was little more than a collection of wild flowers grown for nature study. Now there are school gardens in St. Louis, Chicago, Washington, Omaha, Cleveland, Yonkers, Brookline, New York, Rochester, Philadelphia, Grand Rapids, Saginaw, St. Paul, Cincinnati, Portland and other cities, each meeting local conditions in its own way.

In nineteen hundred the Cleveland Home Garden Association gave away over forty-eight thousand packets of seeds and instituted a test garden in the city. The Board of Education of Cleveland soon took charge of this, being the first city school board to recognize gardening as a regular department. There are now in Cleveland over fifty thousand home gardens due to the influence of the school gardens and the work of the association.

The most noteworthy school garden in a large American city is that of the De Witt Clinton School in New York. It was started in nineteen hundred and one by Mrs. Henry Parsons, and has been an inspiration to many others. On little plats, by a system of two
GETTING EDUCATION IN A GARDEN

plantings, in May and July, this garden is instrumental in keeping
some one thousand children off the streets at least part of the time.
The garden is now called the Children’s School Farm, and has been
made a part of the city park system. Situated in the midst of a
congested tenement-house district, it has proved to be of tremendous
sociological value.

Mr. John H. Patterson, president of the National Cash Register
Company, at Dayton, Ohio, once discovered that hardly a man had
ever failed in his employ who had been responsible as a boy for farm
and garden chores. With this in mind, his company started in
Dayton school gardens which have proved not only successful as a
work of philanthropy, but a good commercial investment for the
company as well.

In Massachusetts several societies did pioneer work in school
gardening, and other leaders are located at Philadelphia, Washington
and Yonkers, Philadelphia standing at the head.

Nearly all of our school gardens have been developed along indi-
vidual lines, reflecting in large measure the personal tastes and en-
thusiasms of their leaders. What we need now is a correlation and
codification of the work, a task which has recently been undertaken
by the School Garden Association of America, of which Mr. Van
Evrie Kilpatrick of New York is the executive head.

But even with this centralization and organization of the move-
ment, it appears that there must be several different kinds of school
gardens to meet local needs, or rather that different aspects of the
work must be given prime consideration in different places.

SOME school gardens run to flowers and ornamental planting,
as an education in horticulture and a love for the beautiful,
as well as an example to the community. Others run to the
practical—the study of soils, of blights, of varieties and the growing
of fruits and vegetables. There is to be considered, too, the varying
needs of city, suburban and rural communities. In some places it
may be possible to establish experimental farms in connection with
elementary schools; in others the best the teacher can do may be
to have the pavement in the schoolyard torn up and a few seeds
and shrubs planted, or perhaps window gardens maintained by the
children in the schoolrooms.

The Park Life School Garden of Dubuque, Iowa, has a broad
educational and sociological aim. Here there is a complete oversight
of the children’s work and play, with gardening as the major activity.
A similarly broad work is conducted by the Playground Association
of Pittsburgh.
GETTING EDUCATION IN A GARDEN

One of the most noteworthy achievements along this line is the work of the Fairview Garden School of Yonkers, started in nineteen hundred and three by Miss Mary Marshall Butler, president of the Woman's Institute of Yonkers, and supported now by the Fairview Garden School Association. Two small gardens were started in the tenement district with thirty-six schoolboys. Two unsightly vacant lots were transformed into such successful gardens that the next year the gardens were planted on a larger scale, and later nearly two acres of land were secured for a garden school and were divided into plots. This has since been increased to three and one-half acres, and some six hundred boys and girls, from eight to thirteen years of age, are given opportunities that would otherwise be denied them. Over one thousand have applied for plots in one season, representing many nationalities. The average daily attendance during the season has been two hundred and sixty, every child being required to cultivate his or her plot twice a week. Each child owns whatever he raises, the average value of the product of each plot having been estimated at five dollars.

Next a club house was secured, chiefly for winter use, and during the winter the gardens were turned into basket-ball and football grounds and a skating pond. At the club house the attendance was so great that the children had to be divided into squads, an average of seventy-five coming each day. Illustrated lectures have proved most popular and of unquestioned educational value. Sewing clubs, vegetable clubs, a reading club and a dancing club have been formed, and a Penny Provident Fund established. Instruction is given in sewing, cooking, kindergarten and basket weaving. Last winter the children put up thousands of packets of seeds for use in the garden school and for distribution among the public schools.

The school now owns a greenhouse in which plants are started for early gardening and decorative plants are grown. A greenhouse class of a dozen boys has been given special instruction and practice in propagation, potting, the care of house plants and window boxes, the use of coldframes and hotbeds, and the testing of seeds.

The children's home-garden movement is a natural outgrowth of the school garden, and is being pushed by various community improvement and school gardening associations. It is an extension of the school-garden idea, and in most places gives the child a better opportunity to develop individuality and the sense of ownership and responsibility.

A kindred movement looks toward the utilization of vacant lots in the cities. Where this can be successfully carried out it has a many-sided value. It is a logical method of using waste land and of
reducing the high cost of living. The American people need to learn what can be done on a small plot of ground by intensive methods. Moreover, an uncultivated vacant lot is always an eyesore.

During the business depression of eighteen hundred and ninety-four Mayor Pingree of Detroit, by his "potato patch plan," putting the idle hands on the idle lands, reduced the pay roll of the city poor by sixty per cent. In New York, Bolton Hall proved again the economic value of cultivating the vacant lot until his work was turned over to the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, which in turn was obliged to abandon it because of local real estate conditions. Today in Philadelphia in addition to the children who develop the nine school gardens and the eight thousand home gardens, about six thousand persons maintain themselves on waste land at a cost of about four dollars per family. This is not charity, but part of the community's tax for instruction, while the Garden Club of Minneapolis has proved that vacant lot gardening on a large scale is eminently practicable. It is to be hoped that the school garden movement will soon be extended to include the cultivation of all the waste spaces within our city limits.

STILL another extension of the movement which is bound to come will be work with rural schools. Here agricultural training naturally shares a place with instruction in the art of making the country home more beautiful. Pioneer work in this line has already been done in Winnebago County, Illinois, at Jordan Harbor, Ontario, Jamestown, North Dakota, in East Tennessee and in Saskatchewan. Here is a problem well worthy of the attention of school-garden workers.

Now all this movement, with its boundless possibilities, will require trained teachers and supervisors, and our system of preparing them is as yet largely undeveloped. In France the courses in the normal schools are made to include such instruction as will enable the graduate teachers "to carry to the elementary schools an exact knowledge of the soil, the means of improving it, the methods of cultivation and the management of a farm and garden." In Ontario training for the teaching of school gardening is part of the course in agriculture and horticulture. At the Macdonald Institute special courses are given to fit teachers to conduct school-gardening work.

In the United States the first steps along this line were taken in eighteen hundred and ninety-seven. The State Normal School at Hyannis, Massachusetts, gives this training, and truck-garden training is given by the School of Horticulture at Hartford, Connecticut, and at the training garden of the Home Gardens Association of
GETTING EDUCATION IN A GARDEN

Cleveland. The State Normal School of East Tennessee, at Johnson City, an institution only three years old, is training teachers to handle school gardens and agricultural instruction, particularly for rural schools. These opportunities should be greatly extended and school gardening made a part of all our normal school courses. For those teachers who have not had this training, but who desire to undertake school-gardening work, the School Garden Association of America has prepared outlines and descriptions of methods and materials. Some understanding of horticulture and the soil and some personal experience, however, are essential.

The ideal school garden should be large enough to provide a small plat for each child, or at least a plat for each group of half a dozen children. The element of competition may be introduced by means of simple prizes—preferably not cash—for the best conducted plats. Teachers should be competent to give at least rudimentary instruction in preparing the soil, cultivation and the fundamental facts of horticulture. The ideal school garden would include ornamental planting as a setting for the building, playgrounds, a garden with both individual and cooperative flower and vegetable plats, experimental plats, larger areas for orchard and nursery, coldframes, hotbeds, a greenhouse, a water garden, tool house and other equipment, and lecture room and laboratory facilities.

The greenhouse, wherever practicable, is an invaluable addition to the school garden, if only because it makes possible an extension of the gardening season. Four years ago the Pittsburgh Playground Association was asked to add a modest greenhouse to the equipment of its children’s garden department. An abandoned wooden building at one of the playgrounds in the heart of the city was remodeled, and a lean-to glass roof placed upon it. Here classes of children work every afternoon.

The time will come, it is to be hoped, when every board of education will organize a department of school gardening, but that time is not yet. In many places individual teachers must make the beginning. Or a local school-gardening society may be formed by interested citizens to raise the necessary funds, to secure land, equipment and instructors, and to maintain the work as a semi-public enterprise until such time as the board of education may be persuaded to take it over. It is in this way that the public-spirited man or woman anywhere may do pioneer work in a movement of incalculable usefulness.