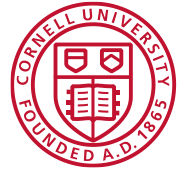


Cornell Cooperative Extension Cornell Garden-Based Learning



Planning a Successful School & Community Garden Program Course Syllabus Summer 2026

Instructor: Donna Alese Cooke dmc72@cornell.edu

Office Hours: If you would like to meet with the instructor individually via Zoom, reach out to set up a meeting during available Office Hours. Once the course begins, please contact the course instructor via messaging within Moodle.

Welcome!

Welcome to the **Planning a Successful School & Community Garden Program** online course. We are pleased that you are inspired to further enrich your practice of community-based gardening in schools and communities, for children, youth, and /or adult audiences.

Course Schedule:

- **June 29-July 10: Welcome & Introductions, Module One**
 - Introductions
 - Growing Your Team; Community Partnerships
- **July 3-6: Holiday Break**
- **July 13-17: Module 2:**
 - Using Logic Models to Define Program Goals
- **July 18-24: Break**
- **July 27- August 7: Modules 3 & 4**
 - Assessing Your Site & Tapping Your Community Resources
 - Evaluation and Assessment; Curriculum Toolbox
- **August 10-21: Modules 5 & 6**
 - Creating Sustainable Gardens; Finding Funding
 - Project Portfolio; Next Steps

Although the last day of class is August 21, due date for assignments in Modules 5 & 6 is August 24.

Zoom Q&A Sessions & Office Hours

We have found that students benefit from regular one-hour Zoom Q&A check-ins, where all students come together to review the course content, ask questions, and share ideas and progress. These sessions are optional and recorded if missed.

Zoom sessions are Wednesdays, 7pm EST:

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University's heritage. We are a recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities.

- July 8: Introductions, Introduction to Modules 1 and 2
- July 29: Introduction to Modules 3 & 4
- August 12: Introduction to Modules 5 & 6

Zoom link for each session:

<https://cornell.zoom.us/j/5108598970?pwd=JYzFPtYDi3tHYycqBTcRRcQiWap6ZH.1&omn=92924310098> Meeting ID 510 859 8970 passcode 749417

Instructor office hours are available on an individual basis and scheduled on the alternate weeks of the Zoom sessions. Please reach out to the instructor to schedule a personal meeting.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, participants will:

- Understand the foundations of garden-based learning and its benefits.
- Explore and identify available resources, case studies, research, and successful school and community-based garden programs.
- Utilize logic models to identify program inputs, activities, and desired outcomes.
- Use real world tools to practice and develop a garden-based learning program in alignment with program needs.
- Build a toolbox of resources and portfolio of program planning, deliverables, and strategies for sustainability.
- Utilize strategies to organize a community of volunteers and identify leadership.

By the end of this course, you will connect with and learn from others with the same purpose and become more confident and knowledgeable garden-based learning educators, prepared with fully developed program sustainability plans, fundraising strategies, deliverables, activities, and assessment tools.

Approach

Using a logic model approach to program development, this online course teaches methods and strategies on planning, organizing, and developing a successful and sustainable school and/or community gardening program. Participants will connect with and learn from each other, and by the end of this course will become more confident and knowledgeable garden-based learning educators and program organizers.

My Philosophy as an Instructor

This is an online course that you are likely taking for your professional development as a garden-based learning educator, classroom teacher, school administrator or school garden volunteer. My hope is that you are intrinsically motivated to expand your knowledge and improve your teaching practice by completing the readings, assignments and learning activities; that you will take full advantage of the discussions, which are designed for you to collaborate and communicate with your colleagues freely and often; to learn from one another

and explore techniques and strategies that will help you in your professional practice. I will assume that you have read the assigned readings, and I will not "test" you on content, because I do not believe that should be your motivation.

Given the flexible nature of the distance learning environment, it is easy to fall behind and lose out on what could be a very valuable learning experience for you. Keeping yourself well organized and current with assignments will help you get the most out of this course. This course has been designed to be learner-centered, with due dates, deadlines, and self-evaluation exercises put in place to keep you on track, not as a means of penalizing you. Stated simply, you will get from the course what you put into it.

Our communication will be positive and will focus on course content. Rules of 'Netiquette' are followed, therefore rude or offensive language and overly critical commentary will not be tolerated. It is a course taken for enrichment, and the way we communicate with one another should be encouraging and constructive. Please be open with your feedback and feel free to contact me with any questions. A welcoming, inclusive online community with open dialogue is encouraged and welcomed!

What to Expect

You will learn online asynchronously, at your own pace. Anyone enrolled in this course is expected to participate in all learning activities. For your own peace of mind and time management, submit all assignments by each deadline. Your online presence through interactive online discussion forum is essential. It provides an opportunity to ask questions while encouraging a network of state and nation-wide educators, volunteers, and communities to learn and grow together.

Plan to dedicate about 5 or more hours per module for online readings and assignments. Should you take extra time to explore the optional topics and additional resources in each section, expect to add on another hour or two. Given the flexible nature of a distance learning environment, it is easy to fall behind and lose out on what could be a very valuable learning experience for you. Keeping yourself well organized and current with assignments will help you get the most out of this course.

Academic Integrity

Participants are expected to do their own work unless otherwise instructed (e.g. group work). Any assignments should be your original work done, and to avoid plagiarism, other people's work should be properly referenced. Works that are copied from other students or plagiarized in any way will not be graded or evaluated.

Course Content & Assessment

Weekly modules will open on Monday* and contain the following components:

- A series of lessons that present the topic
- Required readings from online resources that expand upon and reinforce the material presented
- Activities and assignments that help develop your portfolio and toolbox of GBL program planning
- Whole class forum with topics and questions for discussion, and a place to share ideas with others
- Reflective writing that cultivates a thoughtful perspective and dialogue with the course instructor
- Additional readings, activities, and relevant resources

*Module openings for summer sessions may change

Final Project

The final project is a portfolio that consists of a compilation of all the assignments completed in this course, therefore all assignments should follow the theme or topic of your final portfolio project. This portfolio will serve as your "toolbox" of garden-based learning activities and fully developed program sustainability plans, fundraising strategies, deliverables, activities, and assessment tools. Teachers can develop a **project-based unit of standards-based lessons** specific to their grade level, or extension educators and youth workers can develop a **comprehensive plan that will guide a youth gardening program**. You may choose the format of your portfolio, as a PowerPoint presentation, or one complete .pdf or Word document. In the end, you will leave this course with a final portfolio of garden-based learning activities and program planning guides ready to use in the classroom or your program area.

Journal Entries

Within each module you will be asked to submit a journal entry, where you will share your thoughts and ideas with your instructor who in turn will offer you constructive feedback throughout the course. Please keep in mind that this is a self-reflective activity, not a sounding board! Suggested writing prompts will be posted in Moodle; however, you are free to explore other topics if they relate to the course. The purpose of the journal is for you to reflect on something you have learned and take this knowledge to further your program planning.

Grading

While there are no accumulative grades for this course, all assignments are designed to help keep you on track and evaluate your understanding of the content. Assignments are expected to be completed on or before their due dates and will be evaluated on an **Exemplary/Developing/ Emerging** basis for you to track your progress.

- **Exemplary:** Student has submitted assigned task on time, referred to course materials to answer all questions and/or complete all assigned tasks.
- **Developing:** Student submitted assigned task on time or late, referred to course materials to answer some of the questions and/or completed some assigned tasks.
- **Emerging:** Student is just beginning to demonstrate learning in relation to the content, may or may not have referred to course materials to answer some of the questions and/or may or may not have completed some assigned tasks.
- **No grade:** Did not submit the assignment by the end of the course.

Supplies

A computer with reliable high-speed Internet access (to view videos, view readings, submit assignments, and participate regularly in discussion forums). There is no text to purchase.

Continuing Education Credits

This course is non-credit; however, we award the following to all who successfully participate and complete the course and all required assignments. Refer to the Course Completion Requirements Rubric if you wish to earn credit for this course.

- Cornell University Continuing Education Credits (CEU's)
- NYS Certified Teachers: Cornell Garden-Based Learning is now an Approved Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) Sponsor from NYSED

**Cornell Continuing Education Units and NYSED CTLE
Course Completion Requirements Rubric**

Successful completion of this course is evaluated based on "Complete" criteria in the green column.
Moodle will automatically mark required activities as "done" when completed.

Required Activity	Complete	Incomplete	Comments
Lessons Introduction Modules 1-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Viewed and read each page of each lesson Completed each lesson activity to the end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did not view any of the lesson pages Did not complete the lesson activity to the end 	Click on "end of lesson" button to complete the lesson activity to the end
Assignments Modules 1-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted all assignments Received a grade for each assignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did not submit all assignments in each Module Did not receive grades for all assignments 	Assignments in 'draft' form cannot be graded- be sure to complete the submission process by receiving confirmation that each assignment was submitted.
Journals Modules 1-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted all Journal entries Received a grade for each Journal Entry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did not submit all Journal entries Did not receive grades for all Journal Entries 	Journals in 'draft' form cannot be graded- be sure to complete the submission process by receiving confirmation that each assignment was submitted.
Discussion Forums <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction Modules 1-5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posted an initial discussion in each module forum Responded to a least 2 student's original posts Replied to anyone who responded to your original post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did not post or engage in each forum 	Post your original discussion when it opens and keep the discussion going until the forum ends on the due date posted.
Resources and Optional Activities	There are additional resources and optional activities that students are not required to complete; however, they can be manually marked as 'done' in Moodle to help keep you on track.		

revised June 3, 2026