



**Rhodora J. Donahue Academy**

4955 Seton Way  
Ave Maria, FL 34142

**School Profile:**

- Private school
- K-12<sup>th</sup> grades
- 236 students

**Garden Profile:**

- Second year for garden program
- 173 K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students participate in garden program
- One staff person is paid to lead gardening portion of Kindergarten & 1<sup>st</sup> grade Physical Education curriculum
- Parents occasionally volunteer

**General Garden Information:**

Currently we have one raised garden bed for grades K-8<sup>th</sup>. We plant whatever is given to us. The elementary teachers are more involved than the middle school, and I want to give students garden opportunities that are easy to care for as the curriculum gets increasingly harder. I would also like to grow plants that are referred to in our literature classes so that when students come upon a reference to a plant, they can more fully understand the author's intention.

The garden consists of 14 8' x 4' raised beds, six EarthBoxes, and seedling trays. We have nearby picnic tables for outdoor teaching space. Themed beds include a hot pepper bed, cranberry hibiscus bed, and a sunflower bed. I live very close by the school, and am able to walk to the garden when school is not in session. I also encourage high school students to work with me to earn Bright Futures Community Service hours after school and on the weekends.



Naples  
Botanical  
Garden

**Student Involvement & Education:**

K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students participate in the garden program weekly and gardening is part of the Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade Physical Education curriculum. Some high school students come afterschool or on the weekends to earn community service hours. I plant with the other classes on my own time. I use the Naples Botanical Garden planting guide to plant crops that are in season. I want my students to have the most success so that they will be encouraged and not disinterested.

**Garden Product:**

Each child has one to three plants, and the produce is bagged up and taken home.

**Parent Engagement:**

Parents visit the garden during lunch and recess and take home their own child's produce in clean Ziploc bags.

**Goals:**

1. Durable, reusable signs with the common name and Latin name of each plant, and more permanent signs thanking donors.
2. Two beds per grade – grade level teacher can become the expert on what crop the class grows, and they can rotate beds each year.
3. Beautification of the landscaping on school property.
4. Fruit trees.
5. 4<sup>th</sup> grade strawberry garden to fit with their curriculum: they read *Strawberry Girl* by Lois Lenski, which is a wonderful, historical book in a Florida setting.
6. Four to eight more garden beds for the high school classes
7. An outdoor classroom/Chickee hut
8. A nearby storage place for garden tools
9. Wheelbarrow

**Additional Notes:**

We used last year's Recognition award to purchase a rolling compost bin, five bags of soil, three watering cans, trowel, five bags of cypress mulch, 20 stone blocks for hose area, a watering wand, tool cart, hand tool organizer, two sets of hand tools, seed pods, twine, and plant ID stake samples.

A new faculty member (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) came from a school with an established garden program, and is interested in adding more gardening to her lesson plans. I lent her my AeroGarden, and they are now growing six varieties of lettuce in the classroom. We also started "square foot" gardening in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade bed so that the students could take ownership by weeding and caring for their own plants in their own space.

On Grandparent's Day, March 2017, we had a student-led informal walk through the garden with the grandparents. I was able to meet the visitors, take pictures, and listen while the children explained what they learned about their plants. Also, all prospective families are shown the garden on the school tour.

We have received donations of plants and mulch from school families who noticed our garden or heard about it from their grade school children.

**Contact:**

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