

CSCB Matching Grants Program
Little Sprouts Garden
Education Program



Debbie Mitchell, District Manager

December 1, 2021

The main focus of this project was to teach preschool children where their food comes from. Fremont Conservation District (FCD) began this program in 2018 with our local Head Start with a show and tell on different fruits and vegetables, what the seeds look like and how they grow. The students planted seed trays to take home for their gardens. In 2019, we reached out to an additional six preschools for this presentation and received a Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB) Matching Grant for \$1250 to assist these schools with gardens. In 2020, we received a CSCB Matching Grant for \$2150 (which was extended through 2021) to assist these schools with the installation of gardens. We managed to plant gardens in 2020 in spite of the pandemic and did get four of the six preschools with garden beds in 2021. This program was based on the USDA motto "Do good and feed everyone", which was fairly successful with our gardens!! Over the last four years, we have reached over approximately 1000 students, families and teachers!!

One of the goals of this program was to talk to the students about why healthy food is important and what is needed to ensure this, using age appropriate pictures and words. The resource concerns that were covered within the presentations and garden color booklets (supplied to classrooms for additional information) were:

- 🌱 Why soil health is important for our food, what makes soil healthy, and the difference between soil and dirt;
- 🌱 How to water the plants planted – water the soil around the plant and not the plant itself, along with some water conservation;
- 🌱 What plants need to grow (just like us): soil, water, sunlight and food;
- 🌱 Why we need pollinators to pollinate our fruit and vegetable plants; what are some pollinators, and how to attract them to the garden;
- 🌱 What are the food sources our food comes from – farmers, ranchers, fishermen, etc. – and where it comes from before the grocery stores.

Debbie Mitchell (District Manager and Project Manager) assisted five preschools with planning their garden areas (four vegetable and one pollinator) with what they wanted to plant for the year. FCD and CSCB grant funds provided soil, soil amendments, fertilizer, seeds and plants for each garden. Debbie also assisted with planting four of the gardens along with kids and teachers. The other garden was planted by the students and teachers at that particular school. Two preschools wanted planting stuff for their classrooms for the kids to be able to take home for their gardens. One preschool wanted the food demonstration and we also made pickles and salsa to show what can be done with the produce from the garden. One of the teachers at this school also made zucchini bread with her class for the school. Debbie also assisted with harvesting three of the vegetable gardens with the produce being used by the school or for their families to take home. All the gardens were very successful this year!!

Since the preschools that were visited rely heavily on grant funding for their operations, FCD feels it is important to supply all the supplies that are needed for these presentations and classroom projects – we are just happy that the schools want to participate and allow us to come in!! The Matching Grant from CSCB allowed us to present and help each of the schools in the following ways:

- **Fremont County Head Start:** FCD purchased materials for building garden boxes in August 2020 and provided seeds for boxes in 2021. Provided seeds, pots and window boxes for classroom planting. Provided seeds, pots and soil for Nature and Conservancy Day in May. Provided coloring booklets (255) for hand out at the Farmer's Market over the summer months.
- **Rocky Mountain Children's Discovery Center:** Provided seeds and soil for classroom planting. Assisted in planning and planting the garden area providing seeds, plants, and amendments. Improved their pollinator garden for their grand opening of their new playground / garden area.
- **Starpoint Elm:** Starpoint Elm purchased gardens beds this year expanding their garden area. FCD assisted in purchasing seeds and plants and in planning and planting. They served veggies from their garden for their parent date night and had cooking demos for their families, and, 25 families took produce home with them for their use from the harvest for their garden.
- **The Ark Childcare Center:** The Ark purchased garden beds this year to improve their garden area. Provided soil for garden boxes, as well as seeds and plants. Assisted in planning and planting the garden area. Made pickles and salsa with 30 students and staff. Had a tasting of fruits and vegetables with 30 students and staff.
- **Mountain View Pre-K:** Purchased plants, seeds, bulbs, soil and trays for planting a pollinator garden and classroom planting.

All preschools listed above now have garden beds for the students, teachers and parents to enjoy and learn from. FCD will continue to support these gardens in the future with funding and assistance as requested by the schools.

Starpoint Elm and The Ark purchased garden beds for their garden areas this year. The schools took care of their gardens over the summer with FCD checking in every several weeks to see if they need anything or harvest what is ready. Staff are available to discuss the gardens at any time and are usually excited about the growth they are seeing as the summer progresses. One school even had a bear visit their garden and eat the watermelons and honeydews that were ready!! Of course, the deer, rabbits and other varmints are always happy to get their share too!! All gardens do have fencing but sometimes the produce is just too irresistible!!

Since we have achieved our goal of having garden beds at the preschools that we have worked with the last four years, we will continue to assist them with their gardens. The schools also think it is important for their students and families to have fresh food available. FCD has included this program in their general fund budget since these schools don't usually have any additional funding for their gardens.

Since these grant funds were for a multi-year project, the table below shows how the grant funds were utilized over the last three years:

Description	2019	2020	2021
Containers / classroom planting items	\$337.09	\$451.69	\$419.06
Soil & amendments for gardens & classrooms	\$411.89	\$558.19	\$449.18
Seeds & plants for gardens and containers	\$519.13	\$1037.76	\$787.11
Food samples & containers	\$836.63	\$0.00	\$130.01
Total Purchases	\$2104.74	\$2047.64	\$1785.36
Total CSCB funds used	\$1085.78	\$1023.81	\$892.68
Total FCD match for materials purchased	\$1018.96	\$969.29	\$892.68
Total FCD Salary match	\$4272.07	\$4168.35	\$4323.38
Total FCD / Other In- Kind / cash match	\$328.36	\$2395.19	\$2297.02
Total FCD funds used	\$5619.39	\$7532.83	\$7513.08
Other In-Kind / Cash match	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3696.62



Mountain View – pollinator garden



Starpoint Elm
Vegetable garden



The Ark - Vegetable and
pollinator gardens



Head Start – vegetable and pollinator
gardens



Rocky Mountain Children's Discover
Center – vegetable and pollinator
gardens

