HIGH SCHOOL GARDENS PROGRAM ACROSS THE NATION: CURRENT PRACTICES, PECEIVED BENEFITS, BARRIERS, AND RESOURCES

Abstract
School garden programs in the United States emerged near the end of the 19th century. The use and purpose of school gardens are multifaceted and is dependent on the school and individuals involved. Current research on school garden programs suggests positive benefits for student academic achievement, nutrition knowledge, and dietary behaviors. Research on school garden programs is predominately conducted at the elementary and middle school levels. High school garden programs do exist; however, there is limited research on the current practices, perceived benefits of, barriers to, and resources necessary for high school garden programs. The purpose of this study was to collect information on high school garden programs nationwide and identify the current practices, perceived benefits and barriers and resources needed to implementing and sustaining a high school garden program. The survey was sent to Farm to School state lead contacts in all 50 states and then distributed to their garden network. Forty-two respondents completed the survey and were included in the final data analysis. Many respondents reported seeing positive benefits to having a school garden program at the high school level. Current practices, barriers and perceived benefits associated with having a high school garden, and implementation and sustainability strategies are presented in this study. Results from this study may assist new or existing high school garden programs.