# Summer garden maintenance

There are many models for that age-old question of “gardens grow the best in the summer, yet there’s no school in the summer? How can we solve this problem?”

Here are some common ways that schools deal with no activity in the summer:

* Do nothing. Let the garden lie, clean it up the best you can in the fall when you return, see what you have or start over
* The school garden coordinator continues to maintain the garden during the summer. Probably the most common!
* Try to figure out a way to enlist help so the coordinator doesn’t burn out! Here’s a model for accomplishing this:

There was a good model in the town I live in – I volunteered to be part of our town’s elementary school summer school garden upkeep, as the Coordinator was burned out and wanted to take a much-needed vacation!  I wanted to give back to the community and wanted to be a part of our community’s garden, so I jumped in.  Here’s what they did:

* First off, the Coordinator developed relationships with a lot of the parents of the school, and circulated a flyer explaining what they were proposing.
* There was a meeting and workday during the first week of the summer, or right before school got out.
* Everyone signed up for two separate weeks.  I got the first and last weeks of the summer.
* During the meeting, we had an orientation.  Where the supplies were, where the hoses for watering, where everything was stored.  The first person was given the key to the gates and storage shed. At the end of that person’s week, they made contact with the next person on the list to hand off the keys. The list of people and their listed weeks was posted in the storage shed with contact phone numbers, plus contacts for the Coordinator, principal and custodian in case of emergency.
* What we did with the produce, in no particular order:
	+ **Eat all you want/ take home produce**
	+ **Give to the food bank one block away**
	+ **Give to the food service for summer lunch program**. Summer food service programs require an enrichment, or educational portion to accompany the summer meal. School gardens can serve in this role nicely!
	+ There was more than enough to go around!
* In return, the person was supposed to weed and water for their week.  Not every day, depending on the weather.  We experienced a huge sweltering  heat wave/drought that summer, did not get a drop of rain the entire summer, so we pretty much had to water every other day, It was a pretty big garden so I weeded a chunk at a time.  This kept me busy, but I usually did about two hours every other day, like M-W-F.   If it had been really rainy, the shift probably would have been one day of weeding and harvesting each week without the watering.
* Something like 12 weeks for the summer; six couples doing 2 weeks each?

We didn’t do a waiver or release, although that’s probably a super-great idea!