

SCHOOL GARDENING

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This is an age of cultivated tastes. To be socially efficient, the school must not only teach the three R's, but it must instil and cultivate the love for the true and the beautiful in the minds and in the hearts of the young generation. This may be as easily done as not, for school is an education in itself, and although beauty is a thing hard to describe, it is most readily enjoyed and loved if once established.

The subject in this paper will be discussed from the teacher's standpoint. At first it seems that similar papers may be more properly read at trustees' than teachers' convention. But looking into it more closely, there is much that a teacher can do along a line of school gardening. In fact, the teacher, in many cases, is the only pebble in the sand. He or she is the only one to whom more was given, and from whom more is expected. Speaking of the schools and school trustees of our esteemed community, I do not wish to be pessimistic, but let me be frank enough to say that our school trustees are rather slow in attending to their convention, and consequently they are unmindful of the importance of school gardening. Then if the teacher is not going to do it, who else will do it? There are many good reasons why it should be conducted, and also, if conducted properly, there are still a good many reasons to expect good results, of which every teacher should know, and no doubt he does know. However, school gardening must be carried on, for, according to the regulations of the Department of Education, it is no longer optional but compulsory. Now the question is, how best to go about it, how to convince a school board of its importance, and how to persuade them to make preliminary preparations? Certainly the teacher is not expected to eradicate stumps, pick stones or dig the hard virgin soil. Well, even so, there is still much that a teacher can do, and that justifies the reading of this paper.

Coming to the real thing, there are a few items that a careful business man would jot down in his notebook after examining a school ground east of Emerson. They are:

1. Fences and gates to be built or replaced.
2. Stumps, stones, scattered sticks, weeds and dirt to be removed.
3. Garden to be introduced.
4. Trees to be planted.
5. The above to be done at once, in order that our schoolhouse be made attractive and inspiring.

The order will be executed promptly and carefully. This is what a good business man would do, and I believe teachers are supposed to be good business men, too. Why, then, should they not begin by making items? True enough, teachers lack the power and money, and it is a little different proposition. But it would not take much to make items, and if to end were as easy as to begin, there would be no difficulty. It is a good thing to begin by making items.

When we are talking about school gardens we must not forget about school fences. Fence is the first thing, and of course there must be a gate in it. It gives a building a dignified appearance to be enclosed by a good fence. An unfenced place suggests neglect, and does not command respect. A schoolhouse without a fence is a temptation to all farm animals, inviting such vices as untidiness, disrespect for public property. And it would not do to have a public school thus disgracefully exposed. There is injustice and lack of common sense, for how can a boy be made to think in the right way by words, if the facts about him teach him in the wrong?

Stumps and stones may be excused their stubborn presence by a new schoolhouse, but they become an old nuisance when they remain in their positions for four or five years, apparently not being much thought of. With