**Lesson Plan: Preparing the Garden for Winter**

1. Introduction to preparing garden beds for the winter:
   1. Explain why it is important to put garden beds “to rest” for the winter
      1. Limits the survival of insects in the beds and reduces the likelihood of disease and fungus problems the next growing season
      2. Prevents soil erosion and soil compaction
      3. Improves soil structure
      4. Reduces the loss of nutrients in the soil during the winter months
   2. Provide handouts with pictures and brief explanations of common pests and diseases in the garden (refer to the ‘Resources’ section).
2. Review the steps for preparing the garden for the winter in the classroom and then instruct the students to prepare themselves to go out to the garden.
3. Direct the students out to the garden and briefly review the steps again.
4. Divide the class into groups of 3 – 5 students and assign each group 1 – 2 beds. Instruct students in each group to begin removing all annual plants from the beds. When all of the groups are done clearing their beds, pass around bags or buckets of organic material. If bags and/or buckets are not available, one student from each group can be instructed to grab a handful of organic material from the pile and return to their bed(s) to begin covering the soil with their group.

**Steps for preparing the school garden for the winter:**

1. Remove all annual plants from the beds. If the plants have unripe fruit, harvest and store them inside the classroom until they ripen. Add the annual plants to the compost pile in the garden. All plants that have a lot of pests on them or are diseased should be disposed of.
2. After clearing the beds of plant matter, it’s time give them a winter blanket. Several types of organic material can be used to cover the beds. One of the easiest and most common options is covering the beds with a thick layer of leaves. Straw or compost can also be used to cover the beds, either in place of leaves, or with the leaves. It is important to make sure that you work the organic material into the soil as well as cover the surface of the soil.

Additional Notes:

* Inform the students that, if the beds have crops that are intended to be stored in the soil, such as carrots, beets, potatoes and/or parsnips, you must make sure to cover them with straw. This will keep the plants at a consistent temperature so that they can continue to grow and be harvested for the first few months of winter. You could mention to the students that some farmers plant enough root crops to harvest throughout the entire winter season!
* You can also start to prepare your gardens for the winter by planting cover crops, such as ryegrass and oats.

**Materials:**

Garden Pest and Disease Handouts, Organic Material (leaves, straw, and/or compost), Gloves, Bags or Buckets

**Resources:**

Checklist for putting your garden to bed for winter. *Oregon State University Extension Service.*

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/checklist-putting-your-garden-bed-winter>

Putting the Garden To Bed. *Purdue Extension.*

<https://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/gardentobed.html>

A Long Winter’s Rest: Preparing the Garden for the Off-season. *Colorado State Extension.*

<http://www.colostate.edu/Dept/CoopExt/4dmg/Garden/longwint.htm>

Put Your School Garden to Bed. *Kidsgardening.org*

<http://www.kidsgardening.org/article/put-your-school-garden-bed>