

Commissioner Putnam Recognizes Exceptional School Gardens with “Golden Shovel” Awards

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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Commissioner of Agriculture Adam H. Putnam recognizes 12 exceptional school gardens with the inaugural Florida Farm to School “Golden Shovel” Awards.

“School gardens are a critical part of the Farm to School model, allowing students to connect with the growing process by planting, raising and harvesting healthy, fresh produce,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Adam H. Putnam. “Studies show children who are involved in growing their own food make healthier choices about what to eat and show improved academic performance.”



This garden at Freedom Shores Elementary School won Best New Garden for the Elementary School level.

Schools that applied for the Golden Shovel Awards employed a host of gardening methods including raised bed, hydroponic, tower and more. Many elementary schools included numerous grade levels and classes in their programs, while many middle and high schools partnered with their agriculture and culinary departments. Produce from the gardens were featured in student and teacher meals, donated to the community and taken home for the weekend. In the inaugural year for the awards, 100 applications were submitted from 23 counties.

The school garden winners are:

- **Best New Garden**

Elementary Division: Freedom Shores Elementary School, Palm Beach County
Middle/High Division: Lauderhill Middle School, Broward County

- **Best Revitalized Garden**

Elementary Division: Equestrian Trails Elementary School, Palm Beach County
Middle/High Division: Parkway Middle School, Broward County

- **Most Creative Learning Environment**

Elementary Division: Elbridge Gale Elementary School, Palm Beach County

Middle/High Division: Loften High School, Alachua County

- **Best Use of Produce**

Elementary Division: Koa Elementary School, Osceola County

Middle/High Division: Boynton Beach High School, Palm Beach County

- **Longest Sustained Garden**

Elementary Division: Avalon Elementary School, Collier County

Middle/High Division: Coconut Palm Academy, Miami-Dade County

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services operates the state's school nutrition program, including school breakfast, lunch and Summer BreakSpot, in all 67 counties. In the past three years, the department has worked with dozens of schools across the state to implement and support school gardens. In addition, the department began its own garden in Tallahassee that helps educate students, teachers and parents about how to start and maintain a school garden.

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