

# There for the Picking



Both containers and hydroponic materials are counted as supplies necessary to carry out the project in grant applications.

Many factors determine which groups receive grant funding for high-tech gardening projects. For your best shot at a successful proposal, identify the need, find the right foundation, and work together as a group

*This is the first part of a two-part article on funding high-tech gardening with grants.*

## Text and photos by Carolyn Tomlin

Each year millions of dollars in educational, gardening, and high-tech agricultural grants go unclaimed. Why? For one thing, teachers and administrators don't apply for these funds. Also, they're unfamiliar with the procedure for securing funding. Finally, they're not aware that many foundations and corporations, who want to support local projects, have connections in their cities and communities.

## Finding Local Foundations and Corporate Support

Schools often overlook the best opportunity for funding: monies available locally. As a grant writer and workshop leader for schools and other non-profits, I use these suggestions in approaching foundations.

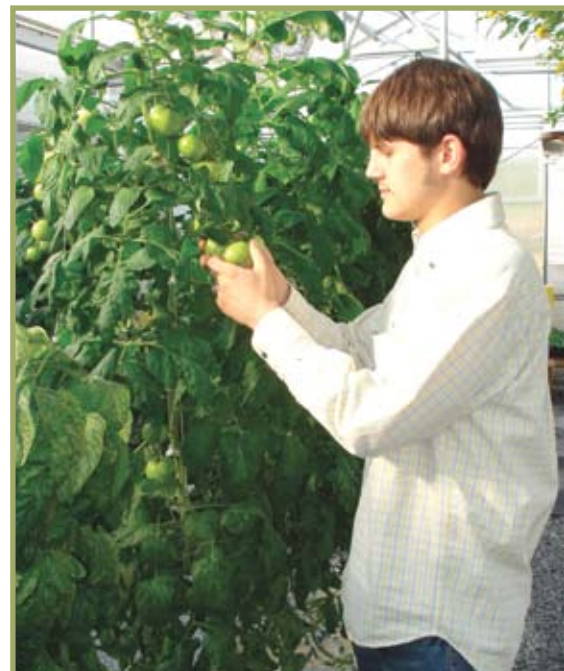
Become highly visible in your community. Look for opportunities to network with people in the business community and social groups of one kind or another. Contacts made through the Chamber of Commerce, civic organizations, volunteer activities, fundraising events for charities, church or other religious memberships, your student's extra-curricular events are important resources.

Check with the local Chamber of Commerce for a listing of businesses and industries located in the same region as your school. Note companies that are part of a franchise and those that maintain corporate offices in larger cities. Focus on those foundations that fund agriscience, hydroponics, education, youth programs, organic gardening, and other agriculture-related subjects.

Identify the CEOs, community resource personnel, or plant managers as your contacts. Call or make an appointment to visit and discuss your grant needs. Does the company have a foundation that supports agriscience? Never overlook the No. 1 rule in funding: The proposal must meet the grant maker's priorities. If a foundation supports music curriculum, don't write a grant for hydroponic programs.

## Types of Grantmakers

**Federal grants**—Offered by the federal government and support new programs for a school district. Very competitive. Requires knowledgeable grant writers who understand small details of preparing a proposal. **Private foundations**—Non-profit organizations having an endowment usually managed by their own trustees or directors. Identify a need and show how they may



Top to bottom: Phillip Williams measures the productivity of hydroponic tomatoes. Student teacher Jake Mallard (left) shows student Halton Smith how to keep a daily check on plants. Students from Liberty High School check plants for disease and insects before marketing.



Above: Johnny Reynolds, principal of Liberty Technology High School, Jackson, Tenn., and Teresa Crouse, the school's agriscience program director, discuss horticultural products needed for the program. Above right: Students Phillip Williams (left) and Matt Tomlin monitor the koi tanks for optimum application of food in aquaculture. Grants that support education, youth, and agriculture can be used for start-up grants or seed money for koi production.

**Community foundations**—Similar to private foundations, with the exception that many donors contribute rather than one single source. Know the geographical area of giving for community foundations. This may include a metro area or several counties nearby.

### Key Areas of Grant Application

Virtually all grants require detailed information in certain key areas. A rule of thumb: Always follow the prescribed format, and be sure to place the required information within the appropriate section. Use the heading and subheadings of the form.

Be sure to include these items in your grant application:

➤ **Cover letter**—Use the letterhead of the organization requesting a grant. Briefly summarize the need, the proposed program, and your organization's qualifications to handle the grant.

➤ **Title page**—Government grants require this page. It contains the project title, the name of both the applicant and the fiscal

solve the problem in a creative way that can be replicated to other schools.

**Corporate**—Company-sponsored foundations whose assets are derived primarily from the contributions of a for-profit

business. Corporations give to schools and other organizations whose programs benefit the community where employees live and work. Grants may include cash, company products or in-kind services.

## 11 Agriscience Grants and Grantmakers

If you miss the deadline, plan to submit the next time. Many foundations read submissions quarterly, others annually. When identifying grantors, be sure to note areas of interest—agriculture, education, general charitable concerns, environment, technology and youth. Some foundations and corporations only give to pre-selected charities. Others give in geographical locations.

### 1. Hooked on Hydroponics Award.

National Gardening Association and the Hydroponic Merchants Association, with material help from American Hydroponics, American Agritech, Hydrofarm, General Hydroponics, Sunleaves Garden Products, and Sunlight Supply. Deadline Sept. 30, 2006. Provides 12 grants ranging from \$425 to \$1,425.

Website: [www.kidsgardening.com/grants/2006-HOH-landing.asp](http://www.kidsgardening.com/grants/2006-HOH-landing.asp)

**2. Healthy Sprouts Award.** Deadline Oct. 15, 2006. Focuses on nutrition and hunger in the United States.

Website: [www.kidsgardening.com/](http://www.kidsgardening.com/)

[healthysprouts1.asp](http://healthysprouts1.asp)

**3. Pioneer Hi-Bred International,** given in the area of company operations. Areas of interest: agriculture, farm safety, science education.

Website: [www.pioneer.com/pioneer•info/corporate/us•guidelines.htm](http://www.pioneer.com/pioneer•info/corporate/us•guidelines.htm)

**4. General Mills Foundation,** given in area of company operations. Funds education, environment, conservation.

Website: [www.generalmills.com/corporate/about/community/listing.asp](http://www.generalmills.com/corporate/about/community/listing.asp)

**5. Wal-Mart Foundation.** Funds education, youth.

Website: [www.walmartfoundation.org](http://www.walmartfoundation.org)

**6. Winn-Dixie Stores Foundation.** Funds education, youth.

Website: [www.winn-dixie.com/company/community/main.asp](http://www.winn-dixie.com/company/community/main.asp)

**7. Best Buy Co.** Funds education, youth.

Website: [www.bestbuy.com](http://www.bestbuy.com)

**8. Barnes & Noble, Inc. Corporate Giving Program.** Funds general support.

Website: [www.barnesandnobleinc.com](http://www.barnesandnobleinc.com)

**9. Martin Marietta Materials Inc. Philanthropic Trust.** Funds education, youth.

Website: [www.martinmarietta.com](http://www.martinmarietta.com)

**10. Lowe's Charitable Foundation.** Funds education, environment.

Website: [www.lowes.com](http://www.lowes.com)

**11. Home Depot Foundation.** Assist organizations with proven track records. Volunteers from local Home Depot stores give back to the community in this environmental grant program. Focuses on development of alternative products, forestry, ecology and green building design. Range from \$5,000 to \$25,000. Proposal available at [www.homedepotproposals.com](http://www.homedepotproposals.com).

### Do-It-Yourself Grant Application

Many grant-making foundations have ready-made applications that can be downloaded from the foundation's website or requested by mail. If no application is available, ask if this simple grant application format outlining these points will be acceptable:

- What you want to do.
- How you are going to do it.
- Who you hope to serve.
- What you hope to accomplish.
- How you will spend the money.
- How you will provide a final report of the funding.



Top to bottom: Liberty High School student Phillip Williams, a senior graduating with honors in FFA, checks the pH in a holding tank. Because of his agriculture work at Liberty, Williams gained valuable work experience in a work-study program at Carter's Nursery in Jackson, Tenn. Designate equipment and supplies in the budget when applying for grants. Grants can supply equipment such as metal tables, fans, heaters, hanging racks and other material necessary for high-tech gardening. Student Phillip Williams checks Bib lettuce and red lettuce grown in a hydroponic solution called Hydro-Grow which includes calcium nitrate and potassium nitrate. Supplies such as these are considered an expendable item when writing grants.

agent (the person who will administer the funds), signature of authorized personnel agreeing to the proposal, and the date. For lengthy RFPs (request for proposals), a contents page placed directly after the title page will help the reader locate information quickly.

➤ **Summary**—In one page, give a brief overview of the project objectives, implementation procedures, and method of evaluation. The summary may be the only section presented to the foundation board for approval.

➤ **Introduction**—Explain what is needed and why. For example, has the school experienced something that indicates a need for funds, such as a tornado, flood, fire or other disaster? Problems sell!

➤ **Need statement**—What do you need to run a successful program that you don't have? Is there a gap between where you are and where you need to be?

Example: "To provide hydroponic equipment to give more students a chance to study agriscience."

➤ **Goal**—Write a broad general statement of the intended outcome of receiving the grant. Example: "Students will be prepared for agriscience post-secondary education or the workforce by using hydroponic equipment."

➤ **Objectives**—What are you trying to do? Objectives should relate to the introduction and to activities in the methodology and evaluation section. Objectives should connect to the needs and goal statement; be written in measurable terms; specify a time frame; identify the group involved; contain answers to who, what, when, where and how much; and include words such as "reduce," "increase," "decrease," and "expand."

Example: "During the 2006-07 school year, the number of tenth-grade students enrolled in agriscience will increase by 15 percent compared with the 2005-06 year."

➤ **Implementation (Methodology)**—How will you accomplish this project? What methods will you use? Why are you choosing this approach? List the activities. Identify the person responsible for each activity. Use a résumé if the person is already employed by your school, or provide a job description for a new position. Provide a timeline with starting and ending dates. Indicate whether this is a new program or one based on research by another school or district.

Example: "Hire a consultant to speak to students on a career in agriscience. Print student booklets showing job opportunities in using alternative energies, hydroponic gardening, automation, productivity, and greenhouse production. Hire a greenhouse assistant to reduce student-teacher ratio."

➤ **Evaluation**—How will you measure your success? Include both qualitative (surveys, interviews) and quantitative (numbers, test scores, data) methods. How will you know if the project accomplished the goals and objectives? How can the project be replicated at other schools?

Example: "Media, workshops, video, websites, site visits, and printed materials."

➤ **Future Funding**—How will the project be continued after funding from this grant ends? Be specific. Grantors want to know what plans the school has for the future of the project they are funding.

➤ **Budget**—Present your proposed budget using a table or spreadsheet. Include basic equipment such as rockwool, lighting, nutrients, generators, computer and software equipment (upgrade and repair).

If there's an aquaculture component, include material and supplies for fish such as koi or tilapia. Do you think your project will need more bodies? How about a greenhouse assistant not funded through the school system. Document each item. Be realistic; don't ask for too little or too much. Grant readers will know the approximate cost of budget items. If a match is required, use in-kind services or volunteer hours (U.S. Government allows \$16.45 per hour). Always include costs for space (approximately \$10 per square foot), utilities, janitorial services, phone services and secretarial services.

➤ **Narrative**—Include all documentation, such as letters of support from collaborative partners, copies of research, statistics, or news clippings referred to in the narrative, and a copy of the school's annual budget. Stay within the specified page limit for the narrative, and add additional material in the appendices. Keep in mind, however, that the reader is not required to consider the appendices or any pages that go beyond the specified page limit for the application. 🍃

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