Step 3. Garden Opening and Public Celebration

The garden can and should be a hub of activity, creativity, community, and learning. Below are some ideas that will enhance community and student interest and participation in the school garden. Celebrate a garden opening and public celebration event or a national day:

- Create a wildlife habitat including plants, water, and food that attract local wildlife.
- Use self-guided tours facilitated by plant identification tags and signs similar to the ones in botanical gardens.
- Utilize guided tours to show parents and community members the garden area (these can be integrated with school open houses and other events).
- Make use of weather station attractions such as rain gauges and thermometers.
- Celebrate National Holidays:
  - March 15 – National Agriculture Day – [www.agday.org](http://www.agday.org)
- Celebrate Local Events:
  - April 13 to April 17 – Border Book Festival
    This unique festival brings together authors from around the world. Live performances, food, fun, and lots of reading. Various locations. (575) 523-3988. [www.borderbookfestival.org](http://www.borderbookfestival.org)
  - May 7 to May 8 – Cinco de Mayo Fiesta
    A traditional Mexican fiesta honoring Mexico’s second revolution. Experience traditional Mexican music, food, and dancing on the historic Old Mesilla Plaza. (575) 524-3262. [www.oldmesilla.org](http://www.oldmesilla.org)
  - May 15 – Blessing of the Field (Formerly the La Fiesta de San Ysidro)
    A celebration of New Mexico’s 3,000 year-old farming heritage featuring farming demonstrations, mariachi music, folklorico dancers, and a blessing of the fields, all capped off with an evening dance. New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum. (575) 522-4100. [www.frhm.org](http://www.frhm.org)
**September 17 to September 18 – Diez y Seis de Septiembre Fiesta**
Mexican Independence Day! Join the village of Mesilla as they commemorate Mexico’s independence. Be sure to catch folklórico dancers, mariachi music, and authentic Mexican cuisine; and have a really good time. Old Mesilla Plaza. (575) 524-3262. [www.oldmesilla.org](http://www.oldmesilla.org)

**September and October – Mesilla Valley Maze**
It's the most fun you can have in a corn field. Bring the kids and those who are "kids at heart" to the rural fun of the Mesilla Valley Maze. Take a hayride out to the pumpkin patch to look for the perfect Jack-O’-Lantern, then discover the many twists and turns amazingly cut into a corn field. Saturdays and Sundays. 3855 West Picacho Avenue. (575) 526-1919. [www.mesillavalleymaze.com](http://www.mesillavalleymaze.com)

**September 28 to October 2 – Southern New Mexico State Fair and Rodeo**
The Southern New Mexico State Fair has something for everyone; a midway, an auction, food, music, livestock shows, and a cowboy rodeo. Southern New Mexico State Fairgrounds. (575) 524-8602. [www.snmstatefair.com](http://www.snmstatefair.com)

**Students who tend the gardens during the summer (must have worked with the plant for over 60 days) are eligible to “show” their veggies and fruits in the New Mexico State Fair or Southern New Mexico State Fair and Rodeo. Check with your Cooperative Extension 4-H or agriculture agent for deadlines and premium requirements.**

Also see educator resource: [http://teacherlink.ed.usu.edu/tlresources/units/byrnes-celebrations/day.html](http://teacherlink.ed.usu.edu/tlresources/units/byrnes-celebrations/day.html)

- Organize and host a Garden Opening and Public Celebration to show your school garden.