



The Vegetable Project, a volunteer group that leads gardening programs in Albany schools to harness the power of exposure to nature, will establish the Friendship Orchard at North Albany Middle School in collaboration with building leaders and community partners. Along with starting the orchard with seven fruit trees, the Vegetable Project plans a day of plant-related hands-on activity and then a series of plant-related hands-on activity during the school year ahead.

North Albany Middle School Orchard Day will be Wednesday, Sept. 28, unless it rains, in which case it will roll over to the following day, Thursday, Sept. 29. Activity will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Central to this initiative is understanding that exposure to nature supports wellbeing, which in turn supports child development and academic work. Time spent in nature has been shown to reduce stress, boost immunity, strengthen mental health, improve cognition and reduce inflammation.

We would love to arrange days in the woods with the school's students. But a single day of tree planting and other plant-related hands-on teaching and learning activity still offers a measure of nature's great gift. And the North Albany Middle School community deserves nothing less.

The day promises to be a celebration of learning that revolves around doing and touching and tasting and experiencing. In addition to planting five apple and two pear trees, students will put five native perennials into the soil, start seeds for salad greens that will grow on classroom windowsills in the following weeks, explore soil where trees will go with simple exercises and make flags bearing messages of peace and signs to identify plantings.

The Vegetable Project would be grateful for participation and partnership from individuals and organizations in the community. Please reach out at [thevegetableproject@gmail.com](mailto:thevegetableproject@gmail.com) or 518-728-6799 to talk about how you can contribute.

#### **Creating hands-on learning opportunities**

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**Never underestimate the  
healing power of a quiet  
moment in the garden.**

