



SCHOOL FOOD GARDENS

Student recording number of eggs collected during class

A school food garden for enhanced learning at

BROADMEADOWS VALLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Cultivating Community has been working with Broadmeadows Valley Primary School for three years supporting the school's learning values by providing collaborative learning opportunities for students and hands-on experiences in the school food garden. One of the highlights of the program has been seeing students apply what they are learning in the classroom out in the garden. Some students who find academic learning a challenge have had the opportunity to shine outdoors.

"The garden is an 'organised jungle' of rotating plants and companion planting. There is a purpose for everything, which helps the children's understanding of the power of biodiversity."

Nathan Gage, Learning Neighbourhood Leader

LEARNING AND LEADING

At Cultivating Community we teach children how to grow their own food, reduce food waste and act sustainably. Carol, the Garden Educator, facilitates exploration, encourages curiosity and enables students to create their own learning environment. Students are involved in the decision making in the garden and develop leadership and problem solving skills. The learning experiences and knowledge gained in the food garden become a stimulus for literacy, maths and science. Lessons in the garden provide a springboard for exploring the world through food production and natural systems. From growing tasty pumpkins to collecting eggs students are engaged in learning about their environment and making connections to where food comes, how it is grown to how it is then used. Biodiversity has a much deeper meaning when students are engaged in food production and caring for an ecosystem up close over time.

“The garden is such a rich learning environment, the student enthusiasm is infectious. We know the program is succeeding when the students are asking all the questions!”

Carol Henderson, Garden Educator

GROWING VERY TASTY PUMPKINS

After harvesting the pumpkins they had grown, students at Broadmeadows Valley Primary School worked collaboratively to estimate the weight before actually weighing them. This provided students the opportunity to practice estimation and using scales before discussing their results to come up with a total weight for all the pumpkins harvested.

Asked ‘what pumpkins they would like to grow next year?’ the students decided they wanted to grow the ‘World’s Largest Pumpkin’! Discovering that this variety would not be tasty the students worked on preparing the soil and then planted some tasty varieties of pumpkins as well. One of the benefits of learning is getting to cook and eat the pumpkins at the very end.

Engagement with the garden each week means that students learn over time and the simple routine of collecting, cleaning, counting,



Student with a chicken

packaging and dating the eggs provides real life data that is used back in the classroom. Students also harvest garden produce to use in their student run restaurant and any excess produce is shared through the Community Café.

The school food garden provides an ongoing and invaluable resource for growing the school community, now and into the future.

Broadmeadows Valley Primary School

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Cultivating Community’s first funded food garden project with schools was in 2000 working with kids from across three housing estates to grow food both at home and at school. From this very first seed sown 16 years ago the School Food Garden Program was born and has evolved into a program that still assists schools today to develop a food garden program that is tailor made to fit each school culture and community. To find out more about our program contact Cultivating Community today.

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