



SCHOOL FOOD GARDENS

Welcome to the magical garden at St Mary Magdalen's

A school food garden provides an open-air 'living' classroom at

ST MARY MAGDALEN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Hidden behind the school fence, on the perimeter of St Mary Magdalen's School is a magical and secret food garden. Bold in colour, with mysterious scents and growing tasty crunchy snacks, this established food garden is a haven for birds and pollinators, and a special place where the students can sit under the apple tree when in blossom, play in the handmade brick cubby or work in the vegetable garden at recess.

In partnership with Cultivating Community, a hidden strip of grass was transformed into a productive garden over eight years ago and is now an ongoing educational resource for the school. There are twelve raised planter boxes growing vegetables and herbs, fourteen fruit trees at various stages of maturity, a composting area and worm farm for organic recycling and water tanks that collect rainwater from the roof to water the garden.

MUD BRICK CUBBY

One project students worked on was building a mud brick cubby making bricks out of clay the students dug up from the garden. With the help of a school dad, the students constructed the cubby and added a green roof that grows herbs and small flowering plants. The cubby has become a wonderful shared space for improvised play and also is used to store tools, watering cans and other garden utensils.

While digging for clay a student's spade hit something hard. The student carefully investigated the hole and discovered he had hit cement. He continued to scrape away the dirt and realised the cement was part of something larger. Over the next few sessions he and some friends played 'archaeologists' which revealed

"It is amazing! It is our open-air 'living' classroom, where real life learning experiences occur, a place of constant change and growth, where we learn the importance of sustainability. Our garden has flourished due to cooperating with each other and with nature."

Ray Hickey, Teacher

steps that led to the original entrance of the school. They had been hidden over the years as the layout had changed and were revealed just in time for the school's 60th anniversary.

A LEGACY PROJECT

For two years the social justice and environment team coordinated with Heather, the Garden Educator, and with teachers to raise money for a 'Jack and Jill' garden seat for visitors from the community to use when visiting the food garden.

The Grade 6 students raised the money by selling seeds, bunches of parsley and homemade cumquat jam made from fruit grown in the garden. With the money raised they purchased the materials to assemble the seat and place it in the food garden.



Students with completed garden seat



Student finds steps playing archaeologist

Parents and parishioners are invited to visit the garden and as special guests sit in the 'Jack and Jill' seat.

"It makes me happy to know that we are leaving our mark and the previous year sixes', as the garden is one of my favourite places."

Shea, Grade 6

Over time ongoing community relationships have been built through selling produce at the local market and hosting corporate volunteers through outreach programs.

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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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