In 2010 Moonah Primary successfully applied to be the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Demonstration School for Tasmania and started implementing this weekly cooking and gardening program for Grade 3-6 students. The school employs a Kitchen Specialist and a Gardening Specialist to facilitate weekly classes alongside the classroom teachers. Each class has a 45 minute weekly gardening class and a 90 minute weekly cooking class. Students grow, harvest, cook and eat fresh produce. The garden is a large area on the school grounds which has grown and changed over time to suit the needs of the school kitchen. A family working bee got the initial 8 garden beds set up in 2010. We now have a chook house, an outdoor classroom, a woodfired pizza oven, a bush tucker garden and many more beds. The students learn about composting, tending the school chickens, planting seasonal produce, the weather, soil composition and so much more. The garden classes have many links to the curriculum which the classroom teacher links with classroom learning.

The Stephanie Alexander Foundation provide many valuable resources which also link the kitchen garden program with curriculum areas such as literacy, numeracy, science, history and wellbeing. In cooking classes the students work in groups and each group cooks a recipe which will be shared with the whole class in eating time. The Kitchen Specialist plans the menu each week. Students learn cooking techniques, how to read and adapt recipes, how to work in a team, how to clean up and many more valuable skills. At the end of the cooking session the students set the table and share their meal together. Conversation about the food is encouraged, using rich vocabulary to describe tastes, textures, likes and dislikes. Both kitchen and garden classes involve the input of volunteers who work with groups of students each week. Seeking, thanking and maintaining volunteer relationships is a crucial part of the Kitchen and Garden Specialist roles.
Each year a group of Grade 6 students work with a local “Celebrity” chef to produce and serve a dinner to 50-60 guests. This is a wonderful authentic learning experience for our students. We have had many wonderful chefs including Iain Todd from Ethos, Carl Windsor from Raincheck Lounge, Philippe Leban from The Source and Tom Samek, artist and chef. In 2013 Kirsha Kaechale from MONA attended a Celebrity Chef dinner at Moonah Primary and was impressed with the kitchen garden program. Kirsha and Ange, the Principal at Moonah Primary, then co-founded the 24 Carrot Garden program which allowed 12 other schools to set up a kitchen garden program over the last 3 years. MONA sources sponsorship for each school and provides funding to employ a garden and kitchen specialist for those schools. 24 Carrot Gardens Project establishes school kitchen gardens partnered with learning activities in the creative arts, culinary arts, science and sustainability sourced through MONA. Schools in 24 Carrot are encouraged to align with the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation program. There currently are twelve schools participating, plus a sister after-school garden in the New Orleans neighbourhood of St. Roch.

There are many benefits for the school community in establishing a kitchen garden program. All stakeholders recognise and value the integral nature of this program to our school culture and the benefits for all involved. The students love the active, hands on nature of the weekly classes and the life skills they learn. They enjoy tasting different foods and there is an expectation that students will participate and try new foods. The power of the peer group is wonderful to observe in classes – children try new foods because their friends are trying them or because their team made it. There are many links with learning and curriculum through the kitchen garden. Teachers are able to link learning in inquiry with English, Maths, Science, History, Geography, Health and Wellbeing and students love to learn in this authentic environment. Parent feedback reports that our students are setting up gardens or pots to grow food at home and that they want to cook the recipes from kitchen classes. Recipes are regularly shared on our Facebook page or in the weekly newsletter. Food is a regular part of our family events as the school kitchen makes this such an accessible option eg our annual Multicultural Feast, Pizza Orientation Evening. Our community love our kitchen garden program and we have many volunteers who come along even though they are not connected through students.

https://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au/

http://www.24cg.mona.net.au/