Kitchen Garden Program Risdon Vale Primary School

Students in grades 3-6 that participate in the kitchen garden program are gaining lifelong skills utilizing the seed to plate philosophy.

Students engage in garden classes and are learning all about the life cycle of a plant. We started by planting seeds in the classroom and with close observations they had soon sprouted and grown into seedlings. We prepared the garden bed ready to plant our new crop and planted our seedlings. Over the next twelve weeks the students were able to nurture and monitor the growth and pretty soon we had a crop of broad beans ready for the harvest. Once the produce is harvested the students use the fresh produce to cook with and prepare healthy meals in the kitchen.

Here are some of the many topics that we learn over the course of the year in the program:

**Bed Preparation**

The students have learnt how to prepare a garden bed and what preparation is needed to ensure healthy soil, nutrient additives, irrigation and benefits of mulching. Good growing techniques have led to many successes in the garden leading to higher yields and productivity.

**Pest Control**

Every month we conduct a pest investigation activity which enables us to identify our problem pests and research organic remedies and treatments to eradicate these pests. The students make and prepare these according to which treatment and pest we are treating at the time.

**Harvesting**

Students are shown how and when to harvest produce correctly. We also harvest seed to save for the following years crops making our program more sustainable.

In the Kitchen the children are able to go out to the garden with the produce list and harvest what is needed for the cooking class that day. The children really enjoy cooking something that they have grown themselves in the garden.

**Safe Tool Uses and Practices**

All students that are new to the program have a tool induction, which educates them about safe use of tools, names of tools and their purposes in the garden. The students fill out a questionnaire about the tools and their uses within the garden. This enables the students to earn a tool license.

**Recycling**

It is important to educate the children about reduce, re-use and recycle. One of my favorite sessions involved the students in a class raiding their recycling bin at home and bringing in an item. We sat and decided what the best use for each item was. We had margarine containers that ended up as a seedling container, plastic soft drink bottles we cut of the bottom and made mini greenhouses for our seedlings. Some scratched dvds became bird scarers and newspapers became biodegradable pots. This showed the kids that you can re-use many items in the garden in many different ways.
Garden Maintenance

The students have learnt good garden maintenance and the benefits of weeding and how to weed effectively and efficiently. We even have a competition for who can pull out the longest twitch root.

This program is so beneficial to the students as it gives them experiences that they may not normally have access to. The skills gained in this program provide greater opportunities and options. With greater knowledge of healthy eating and garden skills the students are better equipped to make healthier choices lifelong.