



Armidale Waldorf School

Could you introduce us to your school?

We are Armidale Waldorf School located in Armidale, New South Wales. Our school is about 27 years old. It was founded by a group of parents with a strong interest in Rudolf Steiner's view on education. We began with 6 students in Kindergarten, and it has now grown to over 130 students from Kindergarten to Grade 8.

Describe your school garden.

In keeping with Steiner's views, a vegetable garden has been a part of the school since its inception, and has always been organic in its management.

We garden organically and biodynamically. We compost all possible waste, and reuse or recycle. We mulch our gardens to reduce our water needs, and harvest rain water for our drinking and garden needs. We also manage our waste with an innovative reed bed system.

How does the garden fit into school life?

The gardening program aims to build students' connection to food production, an awareness of the social and health benefits of gardening, and the delights of eating homegrown food. It is empowering for a young person to collect seeds, plant, harvest, and cook food that they enjoy. Through this real life success, students gain strength and confidence in their abilities.

We use the garden produce in the weekly tuck shop too, which builds pride and a sense of satisfaction. It also strengthens the students' attitudes and experience to begin and complete tasks; skills which are transferable to other elements of life.



Describe a problem that you have had to face or tackle.

Non-gardeners can hold the view that it is 'just a garden' that can be easily relocated if a new building is being planned, or the site could maybe be used for another purpose. But this comes from a lack of appreciation for the effort to build the soil profile, and the sense of place and focus it provides for the community.

Hopefully the garden is now appreciated more widely for its role in building self-confidence, self-reliance, group and individual social skills. We hope it helps develop a positive attitude to the environment, and will continue to be supported in the future.

SCHOOL STORIES



Do you have an interesting fact or story to share?

Environmental stewardship, (or responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices), is one of the key outcomes of a regular gardening program, especially when combined with Landcare style activities which improve agricultural productivity through sustainable land management. Only a heartfelt connection to the environment can create a desire to protect it. While the garden looks simple, its function is much greater. The garden succeeds when it is an accepted practice rather than a 'program' that comes and goes. The effectiveness of the program has increased, as the garden has become inbuilt into the very life of the school.

How has the Australian Organic Schools program benefited your school?

The Australian Organic Schools program injected new ideas and energy into our program. The lesson plans helped us formalise, structure and improve what we had been doing for some time.