

SCHOOL STORIES



Clayton North Primary School

Could you introduce us to your school?

We are Clayton North Primary School, a government primary school located in Clayton, Victoria. Students come from families from all over the world. About 80 per cent of students speak a language other than English at home, enriching the cultural diversity of our school.

Describe your school garden.

The interest in developing a kitchen garden began in 2006 after some old classrooms were demolished, leaving an unsightly, large block of land. We surveyed our students and discovered that some of the things they wanted in the garden were a pond with frogs, a beach area with sand and a water feature.

We also wanted our students to learn about where their food came from and to develop healthier eating habits, so the garden design grew to include fruit trees and some beds for vegetables. We used bricks to edge some of our lower beds and created some timber raised beds for our vegetables.

We have also successfully installed rainwater tanks that are connected with pumps so that we can water our garden, and the turf on our oval with recycled rainwater. In total we have 5 tanks with a capacity to hold 330,000 litres of water.

How does the garden fit into school life?

In 2010 our Principal prioritised the Multicultural School Garden and timetabled a teacher as coordinator of the garden. The coordinator oversees the garden, and works with students from Grades 3 to 6, teaching all aspects such as preparing the beds, planting seeds and seedlings, mulching, weeding, controlling the pests, and harvesting the produce to cook some healthy and tasty food.

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

Our Multicultural School Garden (MSG) began to grow with the addition of fruit trees, water plants to the pond and decorative and native plants around the border.

However, after a period of time, some vegetable beds flourished but others went to seed, depending upon the time and commitments of class teachers. Our garden looked in need of a little love and care.

This was when a teacher was appointed coordinator of the garden. We also sought external advice for support to improve our garden beds. We did this over 3 days with help from our school community and volunteers.

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Do you have an interesting fact or story to share?

With students coming from families from all over the world, and having a culturally diverse school, we have been able to explore different foods enjoyed by different cultures, and create gardens to reflect this. It is great for students to be introduced to different foods!

How has the Australian Organic Schools program benefited your school?

When Australian Organic established their school garden program in 2010 and contacted schools to promote it, we decided to take advantage and download the lessons and recipes, making them accessible to class teachers.

Although we had not originally set out to create an organic garden, we found that this was the direction we were heading in, especially as we explored the concept of sustainability in the introduction of programs throughout the school such as composting, “nude food policy”, water wise program, National Tree Day and so on. We were already embracing many organic principles in our garden such as the use of compost and manures to enrich the soil, organic and natural methods to combat pests, companion planting and crop rotation where possible.