

SCHOOL STORIES



Sophia Mundi Steiner School

Could you introduce us to your school?

We are Sophia Mundi Steiner School, an independent school located in Abbotsford, Victoria. We are one of only three Steiner-IB combination schools in the world, with around 200 students.

Describe your school garden.

The grant we received supported the establishment of a sustainable school garden, and has enabled us to purchase a hot house, rainwater tank, worm farm, irrigation, garden tools, mulch, garden beds, fencing and stakes.

Our students in Year 3 have planted grains of wheat, rye, barley and oats.



How does the garden fit into school life?

Our students have gathered data on the growth and differences between our grain crops on three separate occasions, studying their growth patterns. They applied organic and biodynamic gardening methods, planting lupins (a plant of the pea family with deeply divided leaves, and tall colourful tapering spikes of flowers) for nitrogen fixing, and studied what makes healthy soil.

The children have learnt how to care for their tools, how to use different garden implements, and the importance of not letting weeds get out of control. They have learnt the need to watch the seasons for the appropriate time to make compost, and the value of good compost for plant growth. They also understand the importance of water for the bees, as well as the plants,

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

The canteen began with a vision to provide fresh healthy organic meals for the children in the school community. Buying in the best organic and biodynamic produce can be expensive though, which made it difficult to keep prices affordable for everyone. Growing food on the school grounds has helped keep costs down, and is teaching children about how things grow and where they come from.

Do you have an interesting fact or story to share?

The students are involved in all the processes from harvesting, threshing, to grinding the grains for flour to make bread. They used traditional scythes (a tool used for cutting crops such as grass or corn) and reaped a bumper crop. At the start of the next school year, students will thresh and grind the grains in preparation for baking bread for the autumn festival.

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How has the Australian Organic Schools program benefited your school?

We joined the Australian Organic Schools program in February 2012. Throughout 2012 and 2013 the children used a variety of the lesson plans including studies of where their food comes from, how plants grow and what elements are needed for plant life to survive, and how to rotate crops for optimum production and soil and plant disease aversion.

Children and parents have become much more aware of the garden and know that produce will be used in the canteen for their lunches. The awareness of healthy organic food had been a feature of the school for a number of years, but the garden program added the value of being able to produce our own vegetables and herbs.