

SCHOOL STORIES



Silvan Primary School

Could you introduce us to your school?

We are Silvan Primary School located in Silvan, Victoria. We are a small school with about 36 students.

Describe your school garden.

We began with an organic herb garden. This was designed by parents and teachers, and built over the course of several working bees. The seeds for the herb garden were sourced from an organic supplier, and the value of using open-pollinated seeds was discussed with the children. The children selected herb seeds which had medicinal, culinary and aromatic properties. Seeds were germinated in our hothouse.



Since then, the children and parents have created and tended our school vegetable garden.

How does the garden fit into school life?

Students were involved at all stages of our original herb garden, including: watering, nurturing, and eventually re-planting their seedlings into the garden.

It was wonderful to see children walking through the herb garden, tasting the different herbs and discussing their possible uses. The children were involved in lessons about the medicinal uses of herbs (herbal teas or insect repellents), culinary uses (lots of cooking in the Home Crafts room) and aromatic uses (lots of potpourri, soap making, bath bombs etc.). Students created a recipe book for their favourite herb recipes.



Excess herbs were sold to the community for \$1.50 a bunch, with proceeds going towards the purchase of more herb and vegetable seeds. Grades Prep-3 were involved in organising and selling the herbs, which gave them a fantastic hands on experience of running a small cottage industry.

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

Students have learnt about companion planting and dealing with environmental pests such as rabbits. We have been able to use worm farming and composting to experience firsthand the benefits of composting and the value of worms in our soil.

Do you have an interesting fact or story to share?

The establishment of a home economics room has allowed students to cook fortnightly with fresh produce from the herb and veggie garden. They have been involved in researching recipes, preparation and have gained an appreciation of how to create good meals.



The enthusiasm and high levels of engagement from the community has led to an annual tree planting day at the school. This is a co-operative project with the local council and community nursery. Over 400 indigenous trees, shrubs and grasses have been planted in the school grounds to provide habitats for endangered species of butterflies, and to create a diversity of habitats for native birds, insects and small mammals.

How has the Australian Organic Schools program benefited your school?

We originally received a grant from Australian Organic Schools to create an organic herb garden. Having the funds to create the garden for our school was fantastic because it enabled our students, parents and teachers to connect together to create a sustainable project which reflected the values of growing and sourcing locally, and using natural pesticides. It allowed us to discuss the benefits of organic produce and was the catalyst for many conversations about healthy eating.



The whole experience has strengthened school and home connections, and has been a very healthy catalyst to allow students, teachers and parents to work together and celebrate the achievements of the children, and the changes and improvements to our school environment.