

Crunch and Sip Veggie Garden



Meckering Primary School is a small school in the Wheatbelt. There were 39 students enrolled in 2009, and as such small school there was plenty of support from the local community. The school is an accredited “Crunch and Sip” school, which is a health program to promote drinking water and crunching on fresh fruit or vegetables in their afternoon break. In 2009 Janet Whisson, the Principal, applied for a Small Community Grant through the Avon Catchment Council (now Wheatbelt NRM) to establish a vegetable patch, in order to provide their own crunch.

An area was chosen at the front of the school, and a local rural supplies company donated the rabbit proof fencing. While the soil was not particularly good, the school has access to horse

manure and a composting tumbler was set up, so that the students could learn about composting food scraps, shredded paper and lawn clippings, and how this recycling would benefit the gardens.

Wheatbelt NRM Small

Community Grants

2009/2010

Recipient: Meckering PS

Amount Funded: \$2874

People Involved: 52

The students were divided into working groups of mixed ages, and all had the opportunity to plant out seeds and seedlings. An important focus of this program was for students to become familiar with the life cycles of plants, as well as identify where their food comes from. Vegetables for the patch were

chosen for their suitability to be served either raw or cooked at the Crunch and Sip breaks. Senior members of the community assisted the students with the establishment and planting of the garden. *“I’m happy to say it was a success, and with the enthusiasm the students have shown, this garden is sure*



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to succeed as well”, said Jan Whisson. “ The ACC (now Wheatbelt NRM) wanted to increase the community’s involvement in natural resource management, which could be as simple as learning about the life cycle of a plant”, said Cilla Kuiper. “We wouldn’t have been able to do a project like this without the grant, which will also help to promote a healthy lifestyle through healthy eating.”

In 2010, the success of the 2009 project lead the school to apply for another grant to extend the garden to include fruit trees and introduce worm farms. The worm farms would produce material to feed the fruit trees and vegetables, while the food scraps from crunch and sip time were used to feed the worms.

Worm farms were also used to teach the lifecycle of worms to senior and junior classes, and each class had the responsibility of maintaining a worm farm.

Rain tanker planters were installed to grow dwarf citrus

trees (lemon/orange, orange/mandarin and orange/lime), surrounded by strawberry plants.

Several years later, in 2012 the Crunch and Sip Vegetable patch is still going strong. The limited rainfall is providing some difficulties, but the students are still actively involved in weeding and planting. As was hoped, *“We collect seeds and buy seedlings and are now self sufficient through the funds from the worm juice mainly”* said Jan Whisson. *“We focus on variety in the winter garden but struggle with our summer garden due to the summer holidays and the need to keep the water up to the plants in the extreme heat.”*



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