

Kids connecting with nature

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Sam is a stay at home mum and founder of The Seasonal Table, a seasonal food and gardening website and blog. Alongside this Sam works at St Margaret's School helping to coordinate their kitchen garden program. Passionate about health and nutrition, Sam completed a certificate in child nutrition which proved to be a turning point in her beliefs to further help kids become better educated in healthy eating habits.

In today's world we seem to be programming our kids to a world of structure and routine and to a frenetic paced lifestyle. Down time almost seems taboo; allowing our kids time to roam is a thing of the past. Whilst I'm a believer in routine, I'm also a believer in allowing children the time to be 'free range', that is, a connection to a life free of programming. A time where children have an opportunity to connect or reconnect with nature and to engage full use of their senses. To experience this, there is no better place than in a garden.

A more alarming reason to encourage our kids back into the garden is that Australia is ranked one of the most overweight developed nations and our obesity rates in the past 20 years have doubled. It astounds me that we live in one of the most unpopulated countries,

our climate so enticing, our food supplies for the most part are plentiful and the quality of produce outstanding, and yet we have that statistic hanging over our heads. Has our fast paced, programmed lifestyle allowed us to let go of some fundamental basics. Do we rely too heavily on foods of convenience, fast foods, pre-prepared meals? How many times a week would you hear people say they are too busy to cook? How many mums actually make the food for their children's lunch boxes? Nutrition Australia claims children's attitudes towards food are shaped during the early childhood years. They maintain the best way to encourage children and steer them into healthy eating is to educate them.

The value of food education is endless. It teaches children to make their own good choices and enhances their sustainable

learning outcomes and humane food practices. It demonstrates how they can contribute to a more sustainable future for their generation and the generations to come. It also promotes physical activity.

Kitchen garden programs in schools



Weekly harvesting and tidying in the garden





Styling the food and taking photos for advertising the market stall

are on the rise. These programs successfully integrate outdoor gardens to enhance classroom learning, food education and basic life skills. More schools are seeing the long term benefits of garden education.

St Margaret's School program's purpose is to integrate an organic garden into the primary curriculum. Working alongside the school's Sustainability Committee, the program's goal is to enhance sustainable learning outcomes for their students. The Maggie's Garden Project has four main objectives, environment, health, social and food. To further support our garden we have included a worm farm, water tank and composting bins. All of these have been included into our weekly garden club education.



Integrating an organic garden into the curriculum

and teachers as we come together working to provide the school community with their own produce. So much love and attention has gone into the creation of the garden. Through the garden and its requirements we are creating a sense of community and ownership, giving



There is nothing more rewarding than teaching children the benefits of a kitchen garden. Each Friday I watch our garden club community laugh, nurture and persist with our kitchen garden.

I watch the joy it brings the children

children a time for togetherness, a time for forgetting our fast paced lives and engaging all our senses in the moment.

Teaching them to take their own food from garden to plate is such a privilege. Each week I



A time for togetherness



After the vegetables are harvested the students prepare and price the vegetables to sell to the wider school community at their market stall. Profits made from the stall are used to buy plants for the garden



From garden to plate

take a new group of enthusiastic gardeners and each week the outcome is the same. We work together as a team, problem solving, getting our hands dirty, caring for our plants and harvesting or re-planting. All of us, young and old, with same objective, to grow our own food and become more self-sufficient.

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