

## Growing Community Roots Project: St. Brigid's JNS School Garden, Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin 24



We planted vegetables in our school garden, which added to the fruit and herbs already growing. Then, the boys and girls in the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Class, Resource and Behaviour Support, took turns to be the gardeners. Under the direction of our parent volunteer, Edel, and a group of teachers, they were responsible for taking care of the garden. A total of three parents helped out in the garden. From watering to composting to harvesting, the children got really involved in growing fruit, vegetables and herbs. They then made the link between growing and eating vegetables and that eating vegetables is part of a healthy lifestyle. By bringing home garden produce they involved their parents in our school garden.

### Garden related activities

The 1<sup>st</sup> Class weeded and watered the garden. They identified what vegetables and herbs were growing in the garden. They picked blackcurrants and apples. They also picked turnips and cooked and ate them in school. They showed the carrots, spring onions and beetroot to all the 1<sup>st</sup> Classes and every child got to bring home a vegetable. They showed the cabbage, lettuce, kale and turnips to all the Junior Infant, Senior Infant, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Classes. A free vegetable stall was set up at home time so that all the parents had an opportunity to bring home vegetables from the school garden.

The Resource Teacher brought Senior Infants that had read the story of the enormous turnip out to pull turnips. They then cooked them and ate them in school. The Special 1<sup>st</sup> Class picked lettuce, washed it and gave it to all the 2<sup>nd</sup> Classes to eat on their sandwiches for lunch. Some children regularly checked for slugs and snails while others were in charge of regularly measuring how much the plants had grown.

All classes compost their leftover pencil parings, apple cores and banana peels and the 1<sup>st</sup> Class added shredded newspaper to the compost. Students picked rhubarb and the Home



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School Community Liaison Co-ordinator made jam and 1<sup>st</sup> Class labelled it, including the ingredients.

### Teacher Comments

Our school garden is very much a group effort including children, teachers, Special Needs Assistants, the Caretaker and parents. As a school we have found it to be a great asset in that it provides authentic learning opportunities. It is a very useful tool in promoting the healthy lifestyle message adopted by "Growing Community Roots". It makes healthy eating tangible and practical for all involved. We are very proud of our school garden and even welcomed visitors from the Fatima Garden Project. It's great to share ideas and show what we have achieved.

The power of learning achieved through the garden is best shown through the words of the children themselves. It shows what they did and their understanding of the link between the garden and having a healthy lifestyle. They are coming to a deeper understanding of where the food they eat comes from

*"I picked slugs to stop them eating the plants. I brought home a carrot to show my dad. He said "It's a fat carrot." We had to put newspaper in the compost. We need a garden to grow vegetables. My favourite vegetables to eat are carrots." (Kyle)*

*"I watered plants and flowers. I watered the vegetables. I brought home lettuce and I put it on a sandwich and brought it into school for lunch. It tasted nice. My favourite vegetable to eat is cabbage. I eat cabbage with bacon and potato. My Granny makes that for me. It is my favourite dinner. She normally makes it for special occasions like Christmas or if I be good." (Natalia)*

*"My favourite vegetables are potatoes and carrots. The garden helps you to be healthy by eating the vegetables out of it. I like the garden. The most thing I love about it is I get to water the plants and show the vegetables to the other classes. I like the garden because I get to see baby plants growing and I like picking up plants because they are so tiny. They are very small." (Keisea)*



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