

reflections

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HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Amy Diesel

In a world increasingly driven by technology and sterile landscapes, our children are searching for opportunities to reconnect through community, play and nature. Our kindergarten, Buderim Community Kindergarten, located on the top of Buderim Mountain in the heart of the beautiful Sunshine Coast has implemented strategic initiatives to assist our children, families and broader communities in organic connection.

One of our proudest achievements to date, a project spanning multiple committees, has been our 'Wendy Veale Winter Garden' a permaculture nature space. This

project started as an idea to utilise an unused area at the rear of our kindergarten and has over the ensuing years evolved into an area exploding with abundant produce, promoting sustainability and the joy of nature.

My involvement with the garden project started three years ago when my daughter, who is the second generation of my family to attend the Buderim Kindergarten, started kindy. I was invited to join the committee in the role of Garden Representative, which was a deceptively simple title for the role. In taking on the role, I along with the new committee, inherited the Winter

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW? (CONTINUED)

Garden project commenced by the former committee. This project was an ambitious idea to create a play space where the children could enjoy the winter sun, with the addition of a garden, from a blank canvas that required significant earthworks and implementation of infrastructure.

Our original garden plan was drawn for us by local Urban Architects, Caroline and Duncan who were the founders of the renowned Urban Food Street initiative and included a citrus grove and full permaculture garden. This was one of our first community collaborations, but certainly not the last. Our garden has become a connection point to our local community with contributions from our local Men's Shed, Buderim Foundation, businesses and our neighbours. One local retiree drops in seasonally to gift us seeds to plant that have been harvested from her own garden.

From the seed of an idea in Wendy Veale's mind, our Winter Garden is now a thriving permaculture garden with chickens, native bees and an abundance of seasonal produce. This season, we have planted a cabbage patch and our first crop of root vegetables, our blueberry bush

is fruiting for the first time and we are about to harvest a bunch of bananas. The children stroll down the meandering gravel path and graze their way through – often picking and munching on vegetables they would not dream of eating off a plate. Kale, beans, sorrel, tomatoes, edible flowers, cucumbers and herbs are only a few of the edible plants you will see our children eating. Our children use their scraps to create compost, which is then incorporated back into our garden through the soil. We teach our children sustainable planting techniques and the joy of growing, caring for and harvesting real food. Our next project is an edible native 'bush tucker' garden.

On the plaque dedicating our Wendy Veale Winter Garden is the quote "to plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow". We believe that the tomorrow our children will inhabit is one that will be characterised by organic connections, a connection to land and nature, a connection to each other and the community surrounding us. Our hope is that our garden can be a step in assisting our children, in the most practical and hands on manner, to place value on the important issues of connectivity, nature consciousness, nutrition and above all the joy of PLAY.



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