

Permaculture Partners Newsletter



Term 1 2017

Summer in our Permaculture Gardens

The aim of this newsletter is that each term the schools will give an update on progress with Environmental Initiatives at their school that focus around their Permaculture gardens.



Cringila Public School

The Ambassadors at Cringila Public School are succumbing to the garden magic and stepping into the excellence CPS is renowned for. The mineral rich “no dig” beds are starting to pump the early planting of winter vegetables and herbs. The Ambassadors have been enjoying splashing in the spa bath of clay and trace elements as they soak the straw and lucerne grasses to provide the X - factor for humus building. Always happy to step into the unknown, the Ambassadors of Cringila have been on a fast track to becoming dedicated soil shepherds.



Like a rite of passage, the children have taken their new confidence into the Permaculture practices of weeding, mulching, pruning, chop & dropping, compost turning and more recently propagation. The South American Myrtaceae, Grumichama and the Australian Lilly Pilli are in full fruit and the Ambassadors have been feasting and planting out for propagation. The hot house of 5 Islands Secondary College will be growing the seed on and preparing them for other local schools in true Cringila PS style.



Warrawong High School

The students in the Support Unit enjoy their visits to feed the chickens onsite at Warrawong High School’s Permaculture Garden. The Support Unit’s free-range Chicken Program enables the Autism class to interact positively and care for the wellbeing of living creatures. The students collect food waste from the School Canteen “produce no waste” and walk through the Permaculture Garden to the chicken zone to feed the chickens. Students are always excited to collect the eggs “obtain a yield”

which are used in food technology cooking lessons “use and value renewable resources” and surplus is sold to staff and the funds are reinvested.

The visits to the garden provide students with a beneficial break in the day for fresh air, exercise and an opportunity to engage positively in the Living Classroom. Autism teacher and acting Permaculture Coordinator Abbe Hoogsteden-Gale aims for the students to engage in hands-on practical activities in organic gardening and animal care which facilitate positive and active behaviour and thereby meets the three tenets of Permaculture; Earth care, people care and fair share.



Port Kembla Public School

The 2017 Ambassadors are threatening to be the most cohesive and independent group of Permaculture stars the school has seen in the last 5 years. Term 1 has been all about working on the foundation for growing excellence by focusing on building biologically active soils.

The Ambassadors have been creating mineral rich “no dig” beds and a large stable humus compost heap to accommodate the excess biomass from the summer growth. They have planned for the nutrients to be transformed into a bumper crop of winter vegetables and herbs.



In true Permaculture style, two talented experts have been supporting the Ambassadors program. Matt has extensive local bush tucker and biodiversity knowledge and Sarah Anne is a Canadian agronomist who is sharpening her skills with our Permaculture soil enhancing practices. She is also sharing a host of her own skills including European bees and market gardening. We have a dedicated mum Leah, who is a complete alchemist in the outdoor kitchen transforming our garden greens and herbs into a healthy and tasty shared meal. Leah is a real hit with the Ambassadors.



Warrawong Public School

It has been a long, hot, dry summer and the gardens have been tested, but once again, Permaculture practices have helped our lovely plants not only survive, but flourish!

We returned to find a surprising abundance of fruits on the trees – bunches of bananas, acerola cherries, citrus galore (now that we have eliminated the stink bugs), figs, mangoes and lots of the students' favourites - pomegranates (or as we like to call them, ruby red gems). The cherry guavas also fruited heavily as did the chilli, which will surely have a lot of 'summer heat' stored in their spicy goodness.



This term has seen a new structure for students attending the garden, with Stage 1 classes each participating in an hour-long garden session every fortnight. Next term it will be Stage 2's turn. The arvo mob and support unit classes continue to be the backbone of the garden and it was wonderful to see how excited all the students were to be back and ready to help their school environment. It seems like 2017 is shaping up to be the best year yet in the WPS garden!



Lake Heights Public School

Lake Heights Public School is excited to again be involved in Gardening. This year we will be establishing a few varieties of gardens. We have started a herb and vegetable garden including Italian Parsley, Sweet Globe Basil, and Jalapeno Chilli. These gardens have been enthusiastically maintained by a two classes, 2/3 and 5/6. We have also included plants from our class science projects. Students from 4/5 have planted broad beans which were germinated as part of their "Plants In Action" science unit.

Scraps from "Crunch and Sip" are collected daily and taken to our composting bin and worm farm. Each term, for five weeks a Gardening Group tenders to the school's gardens. In preparation for winter, Lake Heights students will be planting carrots, spinach, peas, cabbages, broccoli, swedes and turnips. Hopefully all planted and ready for a hearty winter vegetable soup for the entire school to enjoy.



Five Islands Secondary College

What a term it has been here in the garden at FISC. We were greeted by an amazing yellow wall of sunflowers bordering the garden. Right from the get go, Aaron Sorenson and Matt McKay along with our amazing Team Green students got stuck right into the construction of our no dig garden beds. Then with dirty hands and lots of smiles, it was straight into the first stage of planting, with several hundred seedlings planted in a few very busy afternoons. The students planted a range of vegetables including lettuce, silverbeet, broccoli, cauliflower, onions and a few assorted herbs. What a change a few weeks and record amounts of rain can make! The garden has flourished with the weather and after just four weeks it is really starting to take shape.



In other news our new worm farms are just about in place and ready to go. Planning has also well and truly begun for our new outdoor kitchen complete with a wood fired pizza oven. Our Construction students will be looking forward to some great practical experience, with work hopefully set to begin in term two. Watch this space for updates when work begins.

Contacts:

- Cringila Public School** Principal Lorna Kaer Phone 4274 1768 Fax 4276 2841 lorna.kaer@det.nsw.edu.au
School Website: www.cringila-p.schools.nsw.edu.au
- Five Islands Secondary College** Principal Jennifer Flowers Phone 4274 0621 Fax 4276 2835 jennifer.flowers@det.nsw.edu.au
School Website: www.fiveislands-h.schools.nsw.edu.au
- Lake Heights Public School** Principal Peter Heddles Phone 4274 2024 Fax 4276 2971 peter.heddles@det.nsw.edu.au
School Website: www.lakeheight-p.schools.nsw.edu.au
- Port Kembla Public School** Principal Kevin Tucker Phone 4274 1041 Fax 4276 2840 kevin.tucker@det.nsw.edu.au
School Website: www.ptkembla-p.schools.nsw.edu.au
- Warrawong High School** Principal Rick Coleman Phone 4274 0707 Fax 4276 2836 richard.coleman@det.nsw.edu.au
School Website: www.warrawong-h.schools.nsw.edu.au
- Warrawong Public School** Principal Wayne Farquhar Phone 4274 1399 Fax 4276 2789 wayne.farquhar@det.nsw.edu.au
School Website: www.warrawong-p.schools.nsw.edu.au

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