

“Under the dirt is a home for bugs and they care for our food and that helps us grow” Charli

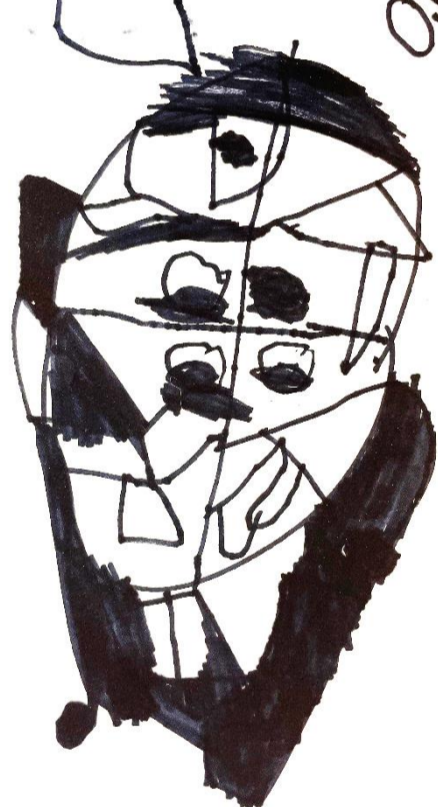
The presence of gardens, including our food garden at Modbury Kindergarten gush with beauty before children’s eyes, between the sky and earth offering experiences appreciated by all the senses. Children take care of the grounds and see the seeds they plant grow, following the transformations individually and collectively, understanding how the life cycle of a plant is nourished by time.



A planted life in the garden

Give me a fish and I eat for a day. Teach me to fish and I eat for a lifetime.
CHINESE PROVERB

In the garden children began folding the soil over their seedlings, tucking them into bed. Carefully moving the soil around, getting to know the seedling and its roots. The seedlings made it possible to explore variations and transformations of growth, colour and smell over time. The seeds return to our table in a new form, adults and children together, prepare their crops. The kitchen becomes a weave of local culinary tradition, ecology, art and dialogue.



“We need to share to keep people safe and care. Water the garden and clean the leaves.” **Robert**

“Hmm I think it has grown bigger, not to eat yet. It needs more” **Harvey**

“You need to wait to pick, it isn’t the colour” **Charli**

“This is the Country, the Kurna country plant” **Alia**

“You need the worms to make the food and they eat your old food” **Alia**

“Check if they are ready, mmm that is interesting, will it be yummy?” **Lucy**

Benefits

- Gives children a sense of responsibility and an opportunity to demonstrate what they are capable of.
- Promotes environmental and sustainability learning.
- Opportunities to grow and produce healthy food and connect children with healthy food and lifestyles
- Provides a tactile and sensory experience. Encourages development of fine and gross motor skills.
- Children are more likely to eat or at least try what they have prepared.
- Connect to Country, explore how Aboriginal Australians—the Kurna people used and still use Indigenous ingredients in their cooking.
- Gives opportunity to expand children’s authentic learning about seasonal changes and weather patterns. Allows them to experience changing weather and strengthens their immune systems.
- “Enables greater contact with dirt - proven to increase healthy immune response, decrease irritable bowel and gut based chronic disease” (Adam Bienenstock).

At Modbury Kindy

- Children visit the ‘Food Garden’ weekly, families are notified of dates on a permission slip.
- Children have opportunities to connect with local businesses who donate resources for the food garden, building relationships with their local community, exposing them to diverse perspectives and developing an appreciation for the community’s resources and spaces.
- Educators write risk assessment and invite family input.
- Children are invited to create a risk benefit.
- The child as citizen: the competent child, the child as possessor of rights, "child as citizen" right from birth
- Children harvest produce from the food garden for cooking.
- Conversations around cooking and celebrations amongst different cultures.
- Families are invited to join our food garden, cooking experiences or share traditional recipes as volunteers or on project mornings.

References

- Learning outdoors Benefits and Risks, Nature Play SA in collaboration with Department for Education and Child Development (DECD), Catholic Education SA, Association of Independent Schools SA (AISSA), Kidsafe SA
- 2023, Belonging, Being & Becoming, The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia V2, Australian government Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian governments



Research

- The Early Years Learning Framework and National Quality Standards acknowledge the importance of outdoor learning environments, paying homage to the Australian cultural norm that we are an outdoor nation - spending time outside should be regarded as normal.
- Nature provides something for everyone regardless of age, culture, physical disposition or level of disadvantage. The outdoor learning environment cuts across multiple curriculum areas, engaging students of all ages in open-ended interactions, spontaneity, discovery, exploration, risk-taking and connection to nature. The calmness and sensory nature of the outdoor environment, means there is a place for everyone, regardless of age, culture, physical disposition or level of disadvantage.
- Access to and consumption of healthy, nutritious food plays a crucially important role in maintaining good health and well-being and is a fundamental human right. Research conducted resulted in children who spent time in food gardens fruit and vegetable consumption increased and they were more willing to taste unfamiliar foods, cooking and food preparation skills improved, and nutritional knowledge increased.
- Allowing children to experience the concepts of numbers, patterns, measurement, spatial awareness and data, mathematical thinking, reasoning and counting is easily accommodated in the outdoor environment and provides a perfect platform to facilitate more formal learning of these concepts.

