

*"The best classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky"*

*Margaret McMillian*

Our gardening adventure began in 2022, with the planting of two very small trees. How wonderful to see the first little fruits develop on our crab apple tree this year - with a little luck, we will be able to make crab apple jam with our Autumn 2025 harvest.

Since parent volunteers constructed vegetable beds for the students, we haven't looked back. In our garden, we grow organic produce and flowers together (a technique called companion planting) to provide food for humans and mini-beasts alike.

We don't worry too much about forming perfectly straight rows, or making mistakes, but instead we focus on building knowledge and confidence through hands-on experiments. We have learnt about different types of plants, and engaged with soil science. We have planted tiny plug plants and sown our own seeds: we have experimented with no-dig potatoes and propagated our own strawberry plants. We have tackled heavy, physical work and challenges with weather; we have tried to face successes and failures with patience. We have also gotten very, very muddy!!

Last year we began a new tradition, and our departing Year 6 students planted a native hawthorn tree in the school garden. This is a particularly appropriate legacy in our small school, where many students will return with their own children and grandchildren in years to come.

So far we have grown beautiful broad beans, peas, strawberries, greens, celery, blueberries, herbs, potatoes and best of all our giant carrots, which were so good that we have to eat them straight away. Our pumpkin crop was a little underwhelming, but we will try again, maybe 2025 will be sunny enough! Alongside our fruits and vegetables, we have wildflowers and bulbs that bring in pollinators and a little colour.

Some children just love to carefully tend the flowers and some could spend hours digging for spuds. Some students dive into insect observation whereas others prefer a cautious distance! There is space for all personalities in the garden.

*Resident Gardening Mom - Stephanie Parkes Young*

