

The Vegetable Garden at Fir Tree School



Vicki prepares the pea bed

Learning in the garden,
growing our own food.

Why a garden at Fir Tree School?

The Vegetable Garden at Wallingford's Fir Tree Primary School has four aims:

- ❖ To help fulfil the national curriculum with lessons focussed on the garden;
- ❖ To support the school's kitchen in its effort to serve healthier food;
- ❖ To provide an example of a more ecologically sustainable way of providing food to the students, school community and the town; and
- ❖ To involve the wider community in activity with the school.

How does it work?

The garden is a joint project between the school and Sustainable Wallingford. Sam Settle is the project manager and Karen Butterworth leads garden-centred lessons.



All food grown on the 2500 square feet of land at the school goes to the kitchen for use in the school dinners. The school has made great strides in improving the health of its dinners, and was awarded the Healthy Eating certificate from the South Oxfordshire District Council. Kit Taplan, a chef who runs the school's kitchen, is consulted as the garden year is planned, to make sure the kitchen gets what it needs. Children are frequently involved in food preparation, so they see the food go 'from seed to plate.' Crops harvested during the summer

holidays are processed and frozen for use when school resumes.

Each Friday, half of one class spends 40 minutes with Karen, doing a lesson based on what is happening in the garden at the moment, for example dissecting flowers or studying the mouth structures of garden insects. The lessons are designed to meet the objectives of the national curriculum. The other half work with Sam and volunteers: sowing, planting, weeding, digging beds. The two halves switch after 40 minutes so everyone has a chance to work and to have a lesson.



Elbow grease: Karen and Jane cleaning the greenhouse

Children from any come to work as they choose during their break times on Fridays, as the manager and volunteers are working their all day. Volunteers include grandparents of students, neighbours of the school, allotment enthusiasts, and others.

There are also periodic garden work parties on a Saturday, when the school community and the public work together.



Students, parents & friends breaking ground

How it started

Fir Tree Primary School began looking for ways to improve the students' health in 2004. One of the things they did (this was pre-Jamie Oliver) was opt out of the county provided food service and hire a cook who was prepared to use fresh and healthy ingredients. They also mooted the idea of growing some of their own food.



Firm foundations: Patrick & Gareth preparing a base for the shed

In the spring of 2005, Sam, a Sustainable Wallingford member with a horticultural background, approached the school and proposed the garden project. The governors agreed, and in January 2006, students and volunteers began breaking ground.

Who supports the project?

A committee composed of members of Sustainable Wallingford has been instrumental in securing funding and oversees the finances. The school has also contributed funds and materials. Financial support has come from the Countryside Agency and Didcot Power Stations. Many local businesses, including Feet First, Suzy Bond Nursery, Root 1, and Grundon have made donations in kind.



About Sustainable Wallingford

In 2003, four friends met to discuss a way of harnessing the desire that many people in Wallingford have to reduce their environmental impact, and that of the town. This was the beginning of Sustainable Wallingford (SW). Four groups were established which address different, yet often overlapping concerns: Schools, Energy, Waste and Local Sourcing. Most people in Wallingford are familiar with the SW Swap Shops in the Regal Centre, where people bring useful household items they no longer need, and take away what they do need, with no money changing hands. Other SW projects include the *Buy Local Directory*, the reusable nappy

campaign, and the green school assemblies. visit www.sustainablewallingford.org for more info.

For more information about how to get involved with the vegetable garden at Fir Tree School...

ring 01491 83 054 or e-mail juliasam@fish.co.uk



Digging for Fir Tree: Mitchell, Jack, Billy & Sophie moving turf