

Nestled in the heart of Springvale, Athol Road Primary school has a unique and highly productive vegetable garden, including a variety of fruit and native trees and a wetlands. Bryan Hunter the school Environmental Studies teacher, works tirelessly with support from the Principal to inspire and educate children from all year levels about the natural environment. He has also engaged parents to maintain a small vegetable garden and enhance community participation. Bryan keeps a variety of wildlife in his classroom including reptiles, aquatic life, stick insects and a parrot that students are directly involved in feeding.

## What you will find...

A walk around the grounds of Athol Road reveals the productive seasonal vegetable beds, abundant berries on strawberry hill, the scented garden and vertical pot plants cultivated by the students.



Espaliered pear trees

Espaliered olive and fruit trees are contrasted with a vast variety of fruit and native trees at various stages of growth. There is also a pen that houses chickens and ducks. The students get involved in selling the organic eggs along with any excess fruit and vegetables each Friday to the school community. All funds collected are injected straight back into the garden.

## The Wetlands...

A safety gate protects the wetlands providing a home for introduced turtles and aquatic life. Planted out with native grasses it includes a small pond that trickles down to another small catchment using recycled water. Bryan ensures the students learn about healthy environments, soil erosion, plant identification and placement, environmental sustainability, food production and pollution control.

Many of the students thoroughly enjoy participating in garden activities and visiting the wetlands to learn about nature.

## Proud Achievements...

Athol Road Primary School has won the Victorian Garden Award and the Regional Award for the Best "Teach and Play" garden. The students and teachers are very proud of their school garden and enjoy support from a range of community stakeholders.

## Positive Outcomes...



Top pond of the wetlands.

The positive outcomes for all the hard work include:

- Lessons focusing on environmental sustainability are supported with practical experiences
- Students learn how to plant and care for vegetables, herbs and fruit trees promoting healthy food choices
- Students get a taste of enterprise by selling the excess produce
- Improved behaviour in students who engage in the garden
- Opportunities to increase responsible behaviour and foster an appreciation of wild life
- An increase in school pride that transfers to the local community
- Recognition and support from the wider community through donations and grants

## Bryan's Top 3 Tips for Success

- ✓ Leadership support is vital for the establishment and ongoing implementation of a school garden.
- ✓ Student engagement fosters a sense of ownership and pride.
- ✓ Make the garden experience interactive