

Making gains in the garden:

According to the KidsGardening.org website, school gardens:

- Significantly increase science achievement scores.
- Improve social skills and behavior.
- Improve environmental attitudes.
- Instill appreciation and respect for nature.
- Improve life skills, including working with groups and self-understanding.
- Increase interest in eating fruits and vegetables and improve attitude toward fruits and vegetables.
- Improve/increase nutrition knowledge and vegetable preferences.
- Improved snacking choices.

GARDENS

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Garden Plant Sale, where most of the plants have been planted or transplanted by the garden class.

Creslane Garden Plant Sale — Saturday, May 9

Contact: Bill Freid 541-895-6166, Debbie Windheim 541-520-7194.

creslanekidsgarden@hotmail.com

DORENA SCHOOL

Things are busy, too, at the Dorena School Garden, where the 98 students are germinating seeds, transplanting seedlings, filling garden boxes and helping with a grant application to allow

them to purchase native plants. Now in its third year, the garden has grown into two distinct areas.

"One is a native garden area where we hope to attract native pollinator species and birds into our garden — there are already tadpoles swimming around in the pond!" says garden coordinator Valerie Rocco. "We have been installing natives into the area this spring, after a wonderful effort last fall to clean up the weeds and grass and mulch the whole area.

"Our second area is a raised bed area where the students are filling up eight beds with garden soil purchased through a grant and many generous donors in our community. We are planting veggies and fruits and trying to get an irrigation system in place



photo by LaRae Ash

Harrison Elementary's garden offers a way for its students to get outdoors and even get dirty! The garden recently received a \$5000 grant.

so that the garden will grow in the summer when the students are no longer around."

The program has developed with the help of students, parents, staff and "many generous donors in the community," Rocco said.

This year, she says the Dorena Garden could use pots for starting seeds, trellis materials, assistance for their irrigation system and volunteers to help make it all happen.

Contact: Valerie Rocco 541-946-1506

HARRISON ELEMENTARY

"Things are happening in the Harrison Garden!" says teacher Shari Skadburg. "We were the recipients of a \$5,000 grant by the Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation, and additional funds from the Farm-to-School Grant. This allowed us to add a tool barn to our garden, built by Jerry Settelmeier. We were also able to purchase more kid-sized tools and upgrade our adult tools."

The Harrison School Garden, which is in its third year, is located on the north playground of Harrison Elementary. Each year, the garden donates seedlings and produce to the Community Sharing Garden and the Cottage Grove Farm Stand.

"This spring we are bringing the garden curriculum 'Eat. Think. Grow' to the K-2 classes, connecting our garden projects to the classroom," Skadburg says. "We have been busy starting seeds in our greenhouse, preparing the beds for planting, and planting cool weather crops. We are looking forward to another beautiful Harrison garden and sharing with our community!"

She sends a "special thank you to all the people who are making things happen and to the businesses and individuals who have contributed donations of money or goods."

"We can always use volunteers, so contact us if you would like to be a part of our garden!"

Contact: Trish Gillespie, 541-520-7871, Shari Skadburg, 541-767-5105

AL KENNEDY ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL

The Sustainable Gardens at Al Kennedy Alternative High School involve students "in all aspects of growing, harvesting, preparing and enjoying food together."

Started in 2007, the curriculum combines organic farming and seasonal cooking in an effort to change "the way students and families eat, learn and create community."

Over the years, Kennedy students have assisted with many garden-related projects within the community. This year, Instructor Matt Hall says the garden is a little behind because students were busy in woodshop constructing seven of the "Little Libraries" that will soon dot the community.

"However, the leaf mulched beds are being turned one by one, and fava beans, lettuce, spinach, broccoli, carrots, radish, beets, onions, peas and cabbage have all been planted," Hall says. "The fall planted garlic is looking strong and the overwintering broccoli has plenty of florets to harvest. Summer crops such as tomatoes, peppers and squash are already started in the greenhouse and will be planted in mid to late May.

"And the students are busily planting seeds to produce plants for our annual plant sale."

The greatest challenge for the program is managing the garden during the summer break. Volunteers are needed to water and weed.

Contact: Matt Hall 541-942-1962

Plant Sale — Saturday May 16, 10 a.m. — 3 p.m.

All proceeds go to support the garden/greenhouse projects.

LATHAM SCHOOL

Each class at Latham Elementary will enjoy its own section of garden this year, says Principal Anne Fisk. "And they enjoyed strawberries and pumpkins from their gardens last year."

Students at Latham not only

enjoy the fruits of their labors and gain the hands-on skills that come with gardening, they learn of the importance of composting through utilization of all the schools breakfast and lunch scraps.

"Unfortunately," Fisk says, the staff member who oversaw the garden is no longer with us. It would be nice to have someone who could help us oversee the garden, as well as volunteers to assist with summer maintenance.

Contact: Anne Fisk 541-942-0147.

LONDON SCHOOL

Things are starting a bit slow this year, says teacher and garden coordinator Deb Henderson, but it's all coming along, with a little help from their friends.

"We always get a lot of support from our neighbors at Territorial Seed, and the Bookmine has been very generous to us," Henderson says.

In the past three years, through a combination of grants, individual donations and the labor of many, London staff and volunteers created a large, art-filled garden surrounded by a 10-foot high fence. In the fall, staff and students harvested, prepared and shared their bounty with their supporters at a community dinner at the little country school.

This year, those who would like to have their own family beds within the fenced garden in exchange for helping maintain the student beds through the summer are invited to apply for space.

"And we are always in need of folks who want to volunteer to help with garden upkeep — especially folks who are willing to work with students in the garden," Henderson adds.

For those who would like to learn more — or to apply for a family garden space — a meeting is being held on April 29 at 2 p.m.

Contact: Deb Henderson, 541-942-0183

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Origins: The school garden movement

First recognized as an important teaching tool in Europe during the early 1800s, by 1869 the school garden was deemed so valuable that Austria issued a royal edict proclaiming that every school must provide one for its students.

In America, the concept was a bit slower to take root, with school garden programs emerging around 1890 from the community garden movement, which saw gardening as a means to cure various social, moral and educational maladies. It was extremely popular, and by 1906 the US Dept. of Agriculture estimated that there were more than 75,000 school gardens nationwide.

At that time, gardens were seen to promote civic beautification and to instill an appreciation of nature in youth. During WWI and II, Victory Gardens in homes, communities and schools were promoted to demonstrate a love and commitment to country.

After WWII, interest declined until the 1970s and the environmental movement, but by the 1990s, school gardens were back and growing.

In Oregon, the Farm-to-School program, which began in the 1990s, has been focused on increasing the number of schools with an edible garden that are: actively used for education; contributing to the school's meal program; have a dedicated, funded staff position. Its goal was to have at least one garden in every county. There are now more than 500 school gardens in Oregon alone.

Recently, Congress passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act and created the Farm to School Competitive Grant Program in which \$5 million annually is awarded for "training, planning, purchasing equipment, building school gardens and developing partnerships to create new or support existing programs."

The program is designed to improve the nutritional health and well being of children, support experiential nutrition education activities and produce local foods from small and medium-sized farms.

