



## School Garden Success Story Blue Mountain Elementary, Maple Ridge

The school garden idea began in 2006. We created a “Garden Committee” made up of staff, PAC members, and parents. Together, with intermediate students, we planned the style of the garden, the start date, and the type of raised beds we would use. The garden was funded by the following grants; Toyota Evergreen \$2,000.00, School District 42 \$2,500.00, Kiwanis \$1,500.00, Union of B.C. Municipalities School Community Connections Program \$8,000.00, and the Ridge Meadows Education Foundation \$1,000.00.

We installed an underground watering system for \$4,000.00 with an indoor electronic set-up which helped considerably. We installed 6 limestone benches (\$3,000.00) for neighbours to rest and students to sit and learn. The grade 7 students, with Christian Cowley (CEED Centre) and a grandpa, built 36 garden bed frames (donated lumber \$1,500.00 and purchased corner braces \$350.00). We received donations of soil, labour and plants from the community.

We currently share garden beds with the Culinary Dept at our neighbouring High School (they have 6 beds), our Day Care Centre, our Strong Start Centre, and our neighbours.



Each classroom has 2 beds and we have school beds for herbs, potatoes, carrots, etc. Neighbours have about 6 beds that they may use for free. We built the garden along the chain link fence that exists at the school. On the fence, we installed an Anti-Vandalism sign with the phone number largely visible. That, and neighbours frequenting the garden, has kept vandalism minimal. We do not otherwise fence the garden as we invite all in to share.

In the summer, the Steering Committee set up a program with Alouette Corrections, for 4 women and a guard, to maintain the garden and a “Parent Volunteer Coordinator” was hired for the spring to fall period to help students and parents with planting, maintaining, and

harvesting the gardens. The coordinator was paid \$500. Gardening tools are stored in the school in a closet. The coordinator has access to these during the summer.

We practice “Seed to Plate” so that children study growth from preparing the beds, to harvesting, to cooking and eating the delicious garden produce! The gardens provide a living, teaching and learning legacy for now and the future that is sustainable, and will extend to the homes and lives of our students - hence, a better, sustainable world!

Challenges: The soil was too acidic when the garden began but compost, manure and soil mix were used to balance the soil.