



## School Garden Success Story Windermere High School, Vancouver

As we became more aware of the consequences of our food choices and eating habits, we felt that this would be an important issue to tackle in our school. Working in the garden has provided an avenue for the cross-grade interaction of students at our school. A strong sense of community has developed as is evidenced by the large number of students participating throughout the summer.

When the garden was initiated almost three years ago, we started small. Although many obstacles were overcome, our success could not have occurred without the undying support from community members, such as the Environmental Youth Alliance, Slow Food Vancouver, Evergreen, and Collingwood Neighborhood House. After a year, we have fully established a composting system within our school and currently have support from UBC students in implementing sustainable agriculture into the school's curriculum.

Currently, we have successfully installed a student-built 16' x 20' greenhouse and thirteen raised beds! This year's project is focused on establishing an aquaponics system, which focuses on the utilization of nutrient production from the



fish to promote optimal growth for crops. This provides an excellent hands-on learning opportunity for Science and Social Studies departments. Partnering with community members and horticulturalists, students are able to learn about sustainable agricultural practices, including the use of companion crops. Our Mason bees will play a significant role in pollination. In hopes of reducing our carbon footprint, we have been given the green light to install seven solar panels that will offset the energy use in our greenhouse for five hours a day! Also, we have just received an Earth Tub, an industrialized composting system, in which heat is used to break down organic matter and other materials such as meat and cheese in just a few weeks.

Our long term goal is simply to increase the food yield by maximizing the use of our greenhouse and establishing an efficient method of seeding and harvesting. By doing so, we are able to provide more food to our school cafeteria and to the Morning Star Program that provides food for low-income families at Collingwood Neighborhood House. Based on our current success, we hope to expand to secondary and elementary school classrooms so students will be able to learn through hands-on activities about the importance of creating a sustainable community.