

*Rawhiti Primary school students
enjoy the fruits of their labour*



What's happening in Orchards in Schools in Christchurch?

Progress report from Coordinator Mary Tingey

"Trees give us fruit and clean our air." Riccarton Primary School Children

In 2015 and 2016 we planted orchards in 11 schools. This year we are well advanced in our planning to plant orchards in another five schools. This year so far Haeata, Isleworth School, Fendalton Open Air School, Chisnallwood Intermediate and Elmwood Normal School are booked to have orchards planted.

It is time for us all to catch up and find out what other schools are doing.

SCHOOLS WHICH PLANTED IN 2015

Northcote School - Since starting out with Orchards in Schools, Northcote School, with the aid of Rotary, have added substantially to the fruit trees in their school. They have burst out of the allotted orchard space and now carry on along a whole fence line. The orchard has also been a stimulus to renew and enlarge their vegetable gardens. They now have six vegetable garden boxes; one per class at the school. Three teachers take turns to be responsible for the gardens. They are aided by a volunteer.

For their next project they are keen to turn the space under the fruit trees into a community garden. The children said that they love going outside and "getting

dirty with nature all around". Their favourite food from the garden are nectarines, strawberries, carrots and beetroot.



*Thumbs up for fruit & veg
from Northcote!*

Oaklands School - The Oaklands school orchard is a beautiful, peaceful place with well grown trees, chickens and abundant wildflowers as an understory to the orchard. Bark pathways wind in between the trees.



The day I visited, children were busy caring for the chickens. Most of their trees are growing prolifically. Unfortunately two trees died but teacher Paul Mc Aven has planted replacements. The wildflowers are occasionally trimmed back with a weedeater to keep the orchard tidy. Near the orchard, Oaklands has a number of vegetable gardens with lush spring onions and crisp celery. The vegetables are used in the school cooking programme.

St Martins School - One day Howard Keene, garden coordinator, found children writing poetry about the beautiful flowers in the orchards. He thought that this was one of the highlights of the orchard this year. The feijoas, currants, nectarines and plums were doing well. Two of the peaches had curly leaf and they will be replaced by apples or pears next year. The orchard is part of a luxuriant garden. The broccoli



plants had strong green leaves pumping with health. The two big compost heaps beside the garden are the drivers of St Martins' healthy garden. Howard plans to use the garden for mapping activities as well as recording the growth of the trees through the seasons. The food from the gardens is used for the garden to table programme.

Addington School The Addington School Green Thumbs work in the orchard. Teacher Lyn Petch says, *"We can never undervalue the learning that surrounds cultivating and growing our own produce. It is never a simple undertaking that fits with knowledge, experience, trial and error. There are many facets, tasks and roles in gardening. There are also many skills and qualities of a gardener that are practised by our tamariki. Some grow in these or they steadily will acquire and learn them. Qualities like patience, persistence, perseverance, teamwork, decision making and initiative."*

Speaking from a teaching perspective I believe we should have gardening integrated into the school curriculum; right from growing, maintaining through to harvesting, cooking and enjoying the harvest.



We need to keep it simple, so in our school orchards, we need to have fruit trees that are disease resistant. In my school, I would also like to have citrus - a lemon and mandarin or orange tree. I would also like to see some sort of school budget for this, as we know there is always a cost involved in feeding and maintaining orchards. Some of our trees are young and still not producing fruit. Our blackcurrant bushes produced fruit, and jam was made by one of our teachers. I would also like to develop more of a school-wide community involvement because it will be the local families who will be around, over Summer, to reap the rewards of the orchard and gardens."

Gilberthorpe School - Pride of place in this orchard is the apricot tree which fruited very well. The currant bushes are strong and healthy. The pears have grown well too. The caretaker manages the understorey by mowing. Teacher Jess Hey has recently taken responsibility for the orchard. She is keen to include children's art in the orchard. She is considering many options to make the orchard space more enticing. The green team are called the Gilby Garden Club.



Jess says,

"The orchard is now our next step since our garden is off limits due to our rebuild for a while.

Our blog is here: www.gilbygardenclub.blogspot.co.nz.

I recommend applying to Project Gro to anyone with a Garden Club at school. They are a fund administered by the Soil & Health Association of NZ and generously donated \$500 to our Garden Club last year. Their funds gave us the kickstart that we needed to get our Garden Club up and running with tools, soil nutrients etc."



Breaking ground at Casebrook Intermediate



Waitakiri's raised beds get dug over

SCHOOLS WHICH PLANTED IN 2016

Casebrook Intermediate - The students designed their orchard as part of their Hard Material classes. When I visited Casebrook Intermediate in May this year all the trees had grown strongly. In fact some had borne their first fruit to the delight of the students.

The students and teacher Lauren Dick-McCann wanted to develop the beds under the trees. The students dug gardens around the trees and formed strong clear edges. The trees are going to be numbered and each tree will have a group who will take responsibility for it. We discussed the best plants to grow under the trees.

Casebrook Intermediate has a thriving vegetable garden, the produce of which is used in the Food Technology class. Seedlings and produce are also sent home with the Friday Garden Group. Some of the plants in the garden, such as oregano and mint, had grown so well they were overtaking smaller plants, so are to be shifted into the orchard where they can grow to their hearts content.



Waitakiri School - When I first went to visit this school building was in full swing, making it hard to visualise an orchard amongst all the rubble. By planting day in August 2016, raised beds, made by the caretaker Ian Woodward (Woody) were awaiting each tree as the school intended to grow vegetables around the trees.

Waitakiri's team of children are called FERNs. Friends of the Environment who show Respect for Nature and Sustainability. All the trees are growing strongly, many looking splendid with vegetables growing underneath.

Teacher Glennys Hill says,

"We would like to thank Mary for the wonderful help you gave us in establishing our Orchard and the continuing support you are giving us. We would also like to thank the Canterbury Horticultural Society for the fruit trees we received."



Glennys & Waitakiri students

Rawhiti School - When I first saw Rawhiti School's orchard site it was a combination of sand, weeds, scrub and a huge pile of prunings in the middle. The task looked daunting. By planting day last August caretaker Georgina Lloyd had reduced the scrub and prunings to a layer of mulch all over the site. All the trees have grown and with them a vegetable garden. By Autumn



Kaiapoi kicks off their Garden Club at the Kaiapoi Borough School Planting Day



Wharenui boys dig deep

pumpkins were rambling around the trees. A fence has been built to create a delightful garden space and the space now includes a green house.

Teacher Vicki Stevenson reports,

"Rawhiti's team of children are called the Enviro group. We are growing seedlings in the greenhouse ready for planting. We have a large group working every Friday so hope to get lots more done in the area. The kids are thrilled to have had fejoas growing and have collected some for seeds. We have been donated a large bath in which we hope to produce worm juice for sale as our other worm farm is too small for the school"

Cobham Intermediate - The Year 8 SPEC group at Cobham Intermediate, along with community worker Lyndon Rogers from '24/7 Your Workers' and teacher aide, Tracey designed and planted their orchard.



The students maintain the orchard. Over Summer they watered the trees and fed them worm tea. Each tree has been mulched twice to maintain moisture and soil fertility. By May all the trees were thriving. They are already talking about their gardening plan for next term.

Riccarton School - Riccarton School has a thriving school garden. Caretaker Colin Renouf has extended the gardens to under the classroom windows where the children enjoy luxuriant crops of spring onions, pak choi cabbages and silverbeet. The trees were planted in and around the main gardens; the trees and gardens compliment each other beautifully. The day I was there children were busy weeding and we also pruned a hydrangea. Every Tuesday morning they work in the garden as part of their Garden to Table programme.

One tree had damage from vandalism during the holidays but will live to tell the tale. One peach tree did not make the grade, but the rest of the trees are growing well.

The ground around the trees had been covered in wet newspaper and pea straw mulch. This kept the trees moist over Summer. The children told me, *"The trees give us fruit and clean our air."*



Caretaker Colin & students

For more information or to join the programme contact:

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