



Tending to the community garden instilled a sense of responsibility in children

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

GETTING CLOSER TO NATURE EXPANDS THE LEARNING HORIZONS OF BUDDING URBAN GARDENERS.

Gardening is an activity ripe with opportunities to nurture values and spark children's curiosity in the environment. At Agape Little Uni. @ Clementi, the community garden serves as an outdoor extension of the classroom, offering authentic and experiential learning for children, says Vice Principal Ms Louise Filardo.

To complement the curriculum on plants, animals and the natural environment, the preschool embarked on a 'Garden Beautification and Sustainability' project with the support of ECDA's Innovation Grant. Says Ms Louise, "We hoped to plant seeds of love for the environment in children and promote awareness of their role in caring for it while developing their observation and communication skills."

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Daily visits to the garden offered many opportunities to develop process skills such as observing, classifying, recording, experimenting and communicating. Mentor

Teacher Ms Nooraini Binte Mahmud elaborates, "The children drew and compared the physical characteristics of different plants, such as their heights, textures and shapes. This helped them understand that while plants may look similar from afar, they are different. They also realised how easily they could miss an insect on a leaf if they didn't look closely, so they were careful to avoid washing off tiny caterpillars or chrysalises during watering."

When the project ended, the centre sustained children's interest and learning by setting up a butterfly nursery to teach children about life cycles. Caterpillars and butterfly eggs from the lime plant in the community garden were transferred to the nursery to protect them from birds and heavy rain, and returned to the garden when they turned into butterflies.

SEEING THE BROADER PICTURE

Tending to the community garden helped children to be aware of the interdependence between plants

LESSONS FROM NATURE



How we can use nature to promote children's discovery of the world.

- > **Garden with children.** As you and the children dig up soil, sweep leaves and water the plants, engage in casual conversations on gardening. This will foster a sense of wonder and reinforce a positive attitude towards the environment.
- > **Use recycled materials to encourage conservation.** Invite children to think of ways to transform found or discarded items into something useful. For example, an old wooden pallet or bicycle can be repurposed as a plant holder, or food scraps can be composted.
- > **Encourage them to record what they see.** Drawing and writing about their observations help children to pay attention to details (e.g. the different shapes of leaves) and hone their observation skills.

and other living things, such as leaves providing food for caterpillars. Daily routines, which included watering the plants and sweeping up leaves, contributed towards instilling a sense of responsibility.

The children were also exposed to concepts such as conservation and sustainability, which were reinforced through several activities. Children and their parents were supplied with pots, plants, pebbles, soil and other materials to make their own 'Garden in a Pot' mini-ecosystem. Using what they learned about light and solar power, the K2 classes made decorative solar-powered jars.

The project has even sparked a keen interest in nature for former students like Eva Ha, 8, and her father, who continue to be active volunteers in the community garden. Mr Ha Yew Mun says, "Eva learned about plants, insects and the responsibility of taking care of a garden. Now we are growing plants from seeds and cuttings at home." ●



Get a sneak peek of Agape Little Uni. @ Clementi's garden at go.gov.sg/gardentransformation, or scan this QR code. It might give you some ideas for your own garden makeover!

