



## Curtis Creek School Garden

Working in a garden brings a sense of pride, wonder, wellbeing, and yes... happiness. The teachers at Curtis Creek knew that in addition to these many positive attributes, science, art, math, writing, and so much more could be incorporated into the space as well.

With the blessing of the administration and the understanding that the funds would need to be raised, the teachers embarked on the quest. With the initial donation of the orchard trees and irrigation for the trees from the Sonora Area Foundation, the garden has indeed blossomed. Front Porch Foundation, connections of parents with local businesses, and the many hours of donated labor and supplies from families and teachers, the garden now sustains itself with three family workdays a year. The rest of the work is done by the students during school.



Our original 10" deep 4' wide circular plastic beds have been replaced with ten 4' x 4' cedar beds, two 8' x 4' cedar beds, and we have repurposed the plastic garden border into herb beds. The garden is fairly complete with a 100' x 40' fenced in area which contains in addition to the 12 beds, a compost area, 550 gallon rainwater collection tank, shed with tools galore, six desk/benches for an outdoor classroom, and three shade sails. We are still working on a grape arbor, worm composting, and a cold frame. There is always something to do in a garden.



Teachers utilize the garden for many curricular areas. Last month the third grade used the outdoor classroom to write about the pumpkin harvest. Both second and fourth graders were lucky enough to harvest the potatoes- a much anticipated event. First grade picked all the tomatoes left from the summer and sorted. Kindergarten created wind instruments as they studied the weather using the garden classroom as the perfect backdrop to seem like they were away from school. Every two weeks each K/1/2 classroom works and visits the garden with a science lesson tucked in the pocket of the teacher. They have measured rainwater, discovered frogs, salamanders, rattlesnake skins, windblown objects, mushrooms, seed pods with zillions of seeds in them, and rogue plants growing out of our compost. Regularly the garden is opened before school so any student can come in and just explore. The students flock to the gate knowing they will be able to taste something, depending on the season.



At our school, the garden has flourished. Slow and steady progress has made an enduring mark on our campus. The 2016 eighth grade graduating class donated money to our school garden as their graduation gift. It was fitting and touching as they were third graders and the first to use the garden when we started it seven years ago. The money will grow.

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