

Bella Vista Garden

The Bella Vista School's "Children's Garden" began six years ago through the efforts of a few dedicated teachers. It has tripled in size, consisting of ten - 10'x10' beds, a garden shed, and a green house that will soon be added. The garden curriculum is aligned with California State Education Standards and builds upon the "Harvest of the Month" Nutrition Education Program.



The garden is supported by parents, teachers, students, and the community. Funding and support are provided by the following educational partners: Healthy Shasta, Bella Vista Water District, Shasta County Farm Bureau, California Department of Education, Shasta County Office of Education, Wyntour Gardens, Color Spot, Bonnie Plant Distributors, and the Bella Vista School Parent Club.

Bella Vista has been the recipient of several grants which include the Home Depot Youth Garden Grant, the Western Growers Charitable Foundation Grant, the California Department of Education School Garden Program Grant, and in 2009 the Lowe's Tool Box for Education Grant. Money is also raised internally through various school fundraisers.



There are many benefits to the school garden. Our students create garden crafts and seed packets which they sell during the annual plant sale and harvest fair. In the spring of 2010, the school plans to hold their first Farmers' Market and sell produce, flowers, and craft items grown and created by the children. The garden



provides the cafeteria with fresh produce for the salad bar with crops such as lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, peas, spinach, and other vegetables. The garden provides students with nutrition education on the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables and garden education including planting, tending, and harvesting of crops, along with math and science lessons.

Students, on average, spend 45 minutes to one hour each week in the garden and approximately 250 students visit the garden on a regular basis. Preschoolers pick strawberries and eat them fresh from the plants for the first time. First graders taste fresh vegetables they have never had before. Second graders go home and teach their families how to plant a garden in their yard. Third graders become field scientists by digging in the dirt and recording their observations. Fourth graders act as garden guides for their kindergarten buddies and junior high students serve as instructional aides.

And most of all, the garden provides a forum for cooperation, respect, and responsibility.

For information contact Bella Vista Elementary School at (530) 549-4415 or www.bveagles.com

