

## **Gulf Islands SD64 School Gardens**

*Presentation January 30, 2019 to the SD64 Board Education Committee*

*Prepared by Robin Jenkinson and Toby Carson, with garden updates from each school.*

*Presented by Robin with Claire Hyslop and Katharine Byers, and everyone who read and shared!*

Over the past thirty years, on Salt Spring, Pender, Mayne, Galiano, and Saturna Islands, volunteer teachers, staff, and parents, supported by community donors, have established food-growing and learning opportunities at every school, reflecting the Islanders shared values of outdoor, ecological and agricultural education for our children.

Moreover, academic, emotional, social, and health benefits of school gardens for both students and teachers are now [well documented](#). Details of the gardens and a project underway to develop a Gulf Islands School Garden Guide are available at [www.schoolgarden.ca](http://www.schoolgarden.ca).

Today, we'd like to share this online resource with you and details about the Activity Guide, which we plan to publish this Springtime. We'll also provide brief updates about what's happening at each school garden.

District-level connections between school garden champions are happening, as demonstrated by the November Learning Circle that took place on Pender and Salt Spring. Funding for this project is provided by Islands Health, the Salt Spring Island Foundation, Whole Kids Foundation, and supported by DPAC and BC Farm to School.

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**Round-table Introductions:** Name? Where you come from? Any connections to school gardens or other gardening?

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## **Now for the School Gardens Updates:**

### **Phoenix**

In the garden beds right now, there are a couple of plants that have overwintered (kale, strawberries, etc.). They're going to have a garden work-party in February. With students, they will lay out all the seeds and map out which seeds to plant in which beds. They're engaging in permaculture and going to plant figs. They're going to reclaim the raspberry and berry beds. The water catchment system – those two big barrels – are going to be hooked up to the soaker hoses so that hopefully in the fall, the flowers will still be blooming. Lisa also brought the homeschool kids to turn over and plant a raised bed. A few more parents have taken an interest now. They got tons of potatoes last year, and the garlic is now just starting to sprout.

*Contacts: Will & Krissy Harrison (parents), Lisa Star (parent), Hannah Ruurs (parent), Sue Starkey (Principal), Susan Garside (teacher)*

### **SSE**

All sorts of garden activities have taken place over the past year that have involved every class in the school (six of the nine classes now regularly use the gardens). These include two all-school garden harvest lunches in June and October, plus plantings (including native camas), multi-lingual garden signage, seed collection, soil building and outdoor harvest & cooking activities. Some coordination of class activities has been funded by the Salt Spring Foundation.

Teachers Gail Bryn-Jones and Katharine Byers have put together a planting plan identifying which plants can be directly sown into the ground and which should be started as seeds in our greenhouse and are engaging other teachers in this process. There are also plans to explore indigenous plants and pollinators, further developing the Pollinator Patch at the front of the school. This spring, classes will complete the Bug Hotel with a focus on Mason Bees, and the new grant-funded solar powered pump for the front garden water catchment system will be installed. A few samples of the Owl Class garden critter projects are on display downstairs at SSE and there are plans to build an owl perch/nesting box to deter rodents around the compost bins!!

In the Hillside Garden, ELF families and SSE students plant daffodils, crocus bulbs, and expanded the ELF Herb Garden. Ongoing monthly volunteer work-parties are preparing the beds for spring plantings. The PAC Garden Committee learned more about working

with children in the greenhouse from a field trip to Fernwood to meet with teachers Erika Verlinden and Andy McPhee. Next up: Halkominem and Sencoten signage for the garden with Earl Claxton (Tsawout Elder) and plantings and preparations for an all-school seeding day in April and a June Harvest lunch.

*Contacts: Katharine Byers (teacher), Gail Bryn-Jones (teacher), Robin Jenkinson (parent), Toby Carson (parent & EA), Shelly Johnson (Principal) & the SSE PAC Garden Committee*

### **Fulford**

In October, 2018, the school enjoyed its annual harvest lunch. There was a volunteer work-party in November to clear a few beds and attend to the compost. Overall though, it's been a sort of "gap" year because they lost the main parent volunteer who had been spearheading it. The good news is that they have a few parents this year who are keen to get the garden back up and growing. Some of those parents have children in kindergarten so they should have many years of gardening to come.

*Contacts: Marie Mullen (Principal), Eric Gordon (parent), Glen Wilson (parent), Teile McDonald (parent, PAC Prez)*

### **Fernwood**

Fernwood is starting and selling veggie starts with an exciting element of entrepreneurial learning, rebuilding the soil in the garden, and growing enough veggies to get kids' hands dirty and share tasty samples of all sorts of vegetables with all students when they're harvested. With the sales of veggie starts, they are able to cover expenses for soil and seeds each year. The pergola area over the picnic tables in the garden was also redone by the PAC this year to provide shade on hot days and cover from the rain. All the classes are involved in garden activities and children take pride in the farmstand and in sharing the veggies they've grown.

*Contacts: Erika Verlinden (teacher), Andrew McPhee (teacher), Shannon Johnston (Principal)*

### **Pender**

Pender's School Garden was established in 2009 and includes a ~100' by 20' fenced garden with ten beds, a Berry Walk, a row of flowers and two espaliered cherry trees, a

greenhouse (6x8 plexiglass) and a Garden Classroom (with a 10x10 cob storage shed, a pizza oven, a living roof, a solar demonstration project, and a rainwater collection system). Located away from the garden is a triple bin compost system and a community hazelnut orchard. This past fall, community volunteers maintained the garden. In November, 2018 Pender hosted a Gulf Islands School Gardens Learning Circle and Tour. There are plans for a spring work-party and a discussion around how to spend the \$800 from the Islands Health grant to encourage more class involvement this coming year.

*Contacts: Julie Johnston (retired teacher), Arthur Kikuchi (volunteer), Dan Sparanese (Principal)*

### **Galiano**

Galiano School enjoys a strong partnership with the Galiano Community Program, who maintain the garden and greenhouse, connecting students with community and great garden and food education. The Food Program has a School Garden Coordinator, Brahmi Benner, who regularly works with every class on garden and food activities. Students also participate in composting (managed by Barry New) and prepare snacks to share with seniors and one another. This year, students would like to grow red fife wheat and make their own pizza from scratch. Annually, Galiano School celebrates Apple and Mini-Nettle Fests and other harvest meals with the community. The Food Program continues garden programming throughout the summer for our children's summer camp.

*Contacts: Brahmi Benner (Galiano Food Program), D'arcy Deacon (Principal), Barry New (Galiano Food Program, Greenhouse & Compost)*

### **Saturna**

Saturna School shares their school garden with the community. Volunteer, Al Stonehouse helped build it back in 1996 and now coordinates the Community Garden aspects. Barb Ropar's Strong Start garden currently has strawberry plants and calendula surviving the winter weather. The Strong Start families will be preparing the soil when the weather warms up and starting plants in the classroom to transfer into their raised bed. All the children will have their own small section to plant. Such fun!

*Contacts: Barb Ropars (Strongstart Teacher), Al Stonehouse (volunteer), Martin Anevich (SEEC teacher), Dan Sparanese (Principal)*

## **Mayne**

Over the past year, Mayne Island school's garden has undergone a significant transformation. Last Spring, students engaged in a cross curricular project to overhaul the entire garden, applying mathematical knowledge of area and perimeter to replace the grass with wood chips, developing expertise on water conservation through the development of our new wicking bed, and gaining first hand knowledge of food sustainability through the planting of over 20 different types of plants. The students then enjoyed the fruits of their labour by hosting a Harvest Lunch for the entire school community this past Fall.

The recent sunshine has turned Mayne Island School's focus back to their garden oasis. Students are marvelling and pondering what next to plant in the outdoor garden, and meanwhile indoors have been developing their plant growth knowledge through experiments with fast growing plants in petri dishes. Students are examining the effect of light or gravity on their plants, with one group placing their plant in a window, and their other in a cupboard. Another group put both petri dishes standing up on their edges in the window and once the plants started growing they turned one of the petri dishes upside down to see how gravity will affect its growth.

They are excited to host a community work party in the Garden again this Spring and explore new plants to grow and share.

*Contacts: Amy Dearden (Vice Principal), Katya Korinth (school administrator), Mayne Food Bank*

## **SIMS**

Their beautiful central courtyard garden was established in 2000. In recent years, EA's and teachers have planted a few veggies in the inner courtyard, while others have maintained the grapevines and ornamental perennials around the fish pond. The school is exploring construction of deer-fenced, raised beds off the parking lot where the compost bins and shed are located.

*Contacts: Keiko Taylor (Principal), Martin Thorn (retired teacher)*

## **GISS**

Chef Mark Kilner's Garden to Market and Salt Spring Salads projects continue to inspire students and the greater community around growing and eating beautiful, healthy food. Many were disappointed not to receive District permission for the central composter machine and for the loss of substantial grant funds, including other school garden and community compost champions who see this as a great way to process those mountains of paper towels plus food waste into great garden soil. GISS is continuing to grow lettuce, herbs, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and other veggies used in the cafeteria and for the Salt Spring Salads summer food cart. They played a central role in helping Salt Spring Elementary with the June and Fall Harvest Lunches. The GISS culinary program prides itself on the importance of educating students on healthy choices, fresh food, including taking an active role in caring for our greenhouse and garden.

*Contacts: Mark Kilner (teacher), Lyall Ruehlen (Principal)*

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**Second, the website!** [WWW.SCHOOLGARDEN.CA](http://WWW.SCHOOLGARDEN.CA) – check it out! I'd like to draw your attention to the school garden descriptions, events, and in the future the Seasonal Activity Guide and Resource pages. There's also a blog that you can choose to follow.

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### **Third: What Happened at the November 2018 Gulf Islands School Gardens**

**Learning Circle?** Here's [a blog post](#) about the event for details & photos. A survey of participants revealed that:

- There's a strong interest in learning more about seasonal curricular garden activities, tied in with MOE Big Ideas and core competencies--workshops in step-by-step lessons.
- Need to connect more across schools and with local ag. NGO's and garden clubs with group emails, invitations, updates, and perhaps a group FB "bragging" page.

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### **And lastly, here are the plans for the Activity Guide!**

The Activity Guide is being created as cards to add to a cardboard box or envelope. These can be updated and exchanged as new practices emerge. Some of the cards were drafted at the November Learning Circle, and one of the workshops at the March 1, 2019 Pro-D Day will be to collect other favourite garden-based learning activities from participants.

Please see the handouts for the [Introduction](#) and draft [Seasonal Activities](#) & [Planting Guide](#).

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**Let's have one more circle-round and please share any take away learnings/comments/ideas that you may have following this presentation?**

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Thank you for your time and all that you do for this community! Further comments or questions? Please contact Robin Jenkinson, [riverjenkinson@gmail.com](mailto:riverjenkinson@gmail.com) or 250-221-0011