

DEVELOPING ENTERPRISING SKILLS IN YOUR SCHOOL'S GARDEN.

by Lesley Bakkers

"School gardens are about more than growing beautiful flowers and plants, they are about using the garden as an instrument to teach".

In this ever changing world, it is vitally important that pupils are equipped with the necessary skills for a successful future.

Enterprise education is a key component of a work-related learning framework which aims to encourage young people to be more enterprising and to enhance skills which can happily sit alongside traditional academic qualifications.

Furthermore, the study of business and enterprise at all levels strongly supports enterprise attributes - an important factor in developing a skilled workforce and a dynamic economy. Encouraging and developing enterprise education in schools could be beneficial to the future of the country as a whole.

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*"It's great making my own decisions, I like to see what I can do"
Student at Pensby Girls School*

With this in mind, I really believe that making the link between the school and their garden is a very positive way of learning new skills.

The majority of schools have grounds, mostly large areas of grass and hedging which are managed in the usual way by groundwork teams, but actually across the country there are only a few gardens. However, the government has instigated a *'building schools for the future'* programme, in which every secondary school and many primary schools will be either rebuilt or remodelled. This gives us a real opportunity to use these newly created spaces and make a positive change for the better.

Schools are the cornerstones from which change can grow and in today's demanding world with all its challenges and opportunities, it is tremendously important to equip students with enterprising qualities which will be of great benefit to them in their personal and working lives. The importance of having an enterprising attitude has never been greater, we need to show students how to spot opportunities, show initiative and be adaptable. Enterprise education encourages young people to be innovative, to manage and take risks, and to develop determination and drive.

It is not about having a mass of information, it is about developing young people's ability to be positive and embrace change, to show initiative, take responsibility and manage themselves.

A school garden is one area where these skills can be very successfully fostered at whatever level the school decides. Students can be inspired in a garden, at KS4, KS3 and now with the development of enterprise into primary schools at KS2, students thrive when they are given the opportunity to create new ways of doing things and designing a garden for their school or local community gives them a sense of pride and achievement in their own abilities.

At the same time, it is an opportunity to talk to the students about horticulture as a potential career choice, to encourage those interested students to find out for themselves just what is involved, what skills and attributes are needed in this sector and how many different and varied jobs there are out there just waiting to be explored. Maybe, through the school garden we can encourage a young person to go onto to greater choices, and become the next great gardening guru!

'Enterprise is different to some lessons - you're given a chance to come up with ideas, think for yourself.' *Student at St Nicholas Catholic High School.*

During 2008 we have been working with many schools through the 'Cheshire Year of Gardens08' project, and the students have welcomed the chance to design a garden for their school and also to think about a small business which will work to fund the garden project. Through this enterprising activity, the pupils develop the necessary skills to handle uncertainty and respond positively to change. They have shown the skills to plan and manage, find resources, get help and support, keep in touch with those involved, organize garden work and lessons, motivate people, and even to publicise their garden achievements. Our aim has been to plant ideas in people's minds about how a garden can work, for students, teachers, their school, and their community.

"This is awesome - I am having so much fun" -
Student at Caldby Grange Boys School

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