

# Edible gardens in New Zealand schools promote healthier choices, according to study

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Edible gardens are taking off in New Zealand primary and secondary schools, presenting important new opportunities to promote fruit and vegetable consumption, new University of Otago research has found.

Researchers at the University's Cancer Society Social and Behavioural Research Unit have highlighted the innovation shown by New Zealand teachers in using their school garden as a teaching resource. Among 491 schools responding to a survey, more than half (52.9%) currently had an edible garden, with most having been started in the previous two years.

From learning about microorganisms to cooking soup, building bean frames to writing poetry, gardens were used across the curriculum as a 'hands-on' way of enhancing student learning.

Study co-author Carly Collins says, "Those involved in the edible gardening projects were obviously very passionate about sharing them with us – when our surveys were returned to us we also received a variety of photos, school newsletters, DVDs and posters highlighting their hard work."

As well as being used to teach specific curriculum areas, edible gardens were also seen to resonate with schools' values, such as sustainability, partnership between [school](#) and home, work ethic, community service, practical skills, pride and respect.

"The challenge now is to ensure that schools are supported in order to maintain long-term success and sustainability of the gardens," says Mrs Collins.

"Many of the schools commented that sourcing funding was a barrier to continuing the garden, with several staff members reporting that they pay for plants and equipment themselves."

The findings appear in in the *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*.

**More information:** "Food for thought: edible gardens in New Zealand primary and secondary schools." *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*. [dx.doi.org/10.1071/HE14082](https://doi.org/10.1071/HE14082)

Provided by University of Otago

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