

FALL 2010

# PLANT A SEED

*Watch it Grow*



## SCHOOL IN THE SPOTLIGHT

### OCEAN KNOLL ELEMENTARY ENCINITAS

The buzz emanating from the Ocean Knoll Elementary school garden isn't just the bees. It is the excited and enthusiastic voices of students and parent volunteers. Throughout the afternoon that Mickey Santana, one of their MG volunteers, and I visited students and parents were gardening, working on their Green Team activities, and discussing their garden based ideas and plans.

Chrissy Gerber, a parent volunteer and the original Garden Coordinator, likens the garden development to the story *Stone Soup*. No one individual had enough to create the garden, but coming together as a community, they have created an outdoor classroom where all 476 Ocean Knoll students garden on a weekly basis.

In January 2008 Chrissy started digging irrigation trenches. Their gated garden is well positioned so the neighborhood can see what's going on in the garden. Neighbors saw Chrissy toiling and soon four parents joined her. The next time these four parents brought four friends and it just grew from there.

Two and half years later they have a bed for each Grade, 1-6, with a separate garden area of planter boxes for Kindergarten. They have formed a Green Team for Grades 3-6 where students gather cafeteria fruit and vegetable waste for composting. They have a native garden, a greenhouse, and a butterfly area. Additionally, Chrissy has a distribution list of 162 parents to call on when donations of ideas, time, and/or supplies are needed.

## SCENES FROM THEIR GARDEN



This mural frames the Kindergarten beds. A teacher spray painted the outline. Students and parent volunteers did the painting.



Each Grade 1 - 6 has their own raised bed in the main garden.



In front of their greenhouse

The Ocean Knoll team attributes their success to start and sustain their garden to three important factors:

★ Communicate your plan:

Chrissy had a vision to create this outdoor classroom. She drew up a plan (see a sample below) and then communicated it widely. After obtaining the support of the principal and the teachers, she talked to parents, asked parents who they knew, and contacted local community groups and businesses. A local landscaper donated all the material for the beds and 30 cubic yards of organic compost. Although he had no children at the school, he said his employees did.

★ Excite your students ;

If you get the students excited about the gardens, more students want to participate. During one visit a parent was explaining soil composition to second graders. To fully explain, the parent had created a mixture containing things such as chocolate pudding for soil and raisins for rocks. Those students never lost interest in learning about soil and got to enjoy their soil pudding at the end of the lesson. Students take their excitement home and want their parents to volunteer. The more volunteers they have, the more time students can spend in the garden.

It also creates “good peer pressure”. An example Chrissy shared is a

student may say they don't like vegetables and students will respond “How can you not like broccoli? Just try it”.

★ Empower your volunteers:

In many articles and presentations on school gardens, the importance of teacher involvement and support is emphasized. Chrissy has taken a slightly different approach to this with great success. The garden is staffed completely by parent volunteers. At the start of the school year they have an information session to recruit volunteers. Currently they have from two to nine parent volunteers per grade. The parent volunteers are responsible for planning the weekly lessons in the garden. See Curriculum Corner on page 3 for more about the curriculum resources.

The parent volunteers have the full support of all twenty teachers who allow their class to spend time in the garden every week. The parent volunteers work directly with the teachers to develop the schedule. Volunteers bring half a class of children to the garden for a half hour at a time. With garden lessons planned in advance a lot is accomplished in these sessions.

Chrissy has been elected PTA President and is turning over the Garden Coordinator role to Nathalie Bruey-Sedano. Chrissy loves the

garden too much to give it up and will be a volunteer in the garden for the third grade class.

As Nathalie takes the lead, her vision for the garden is to build an outdoor kitchen. In addition to planting, she wants the students and their families to experience harvesting, cooking, and learning about good nutrition. She strongly believes that if the students are healthy, they will do better at their studies, be happy, and live well.

Nathalie has put together their first Wellness and Kitchen Garden Newsletter that will go out to students and their families. Click to view in [English](#) or in [Spanish](#). She plans to recruit chefs and local experts to come and talk to students and their families about healthy recipes and nutrition. Nathalie has enlisted the help of her MG volunteer Mickey to identify a speaker on cool season vegetables.

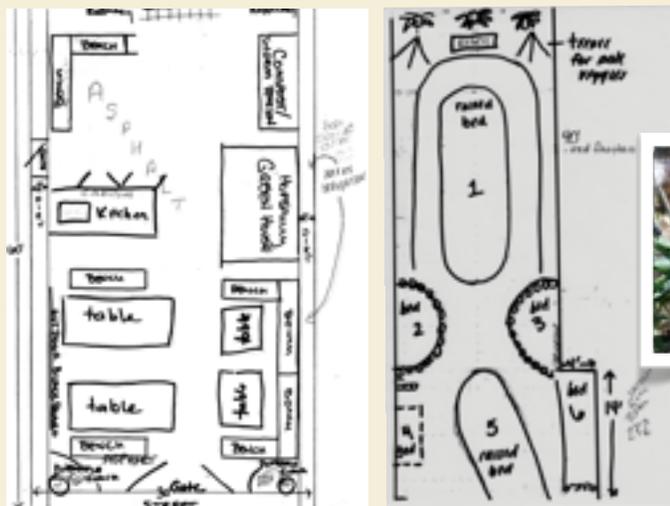
Nathalie wants to hold one to two plant sales a year to raise funds for their garden. They have started to fill their greenhouse with containers of cool season vegetable seeds, to have plants for their Holiday Plant Sale.

Chrissy's mantra was “If we build it, they will come”. Not only have the students and their parents come, they have embraced the garden with infectious enthusiasm that will sustain it for many classes to come.

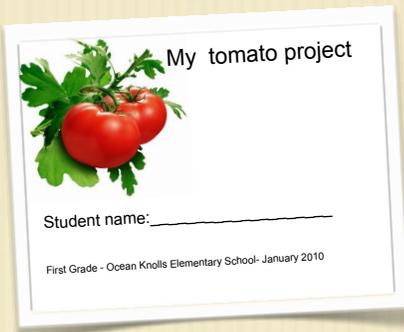
This copy of Chrissy's plan shows you don't need a professional computer layout to get things started. She had a hand drawn plan with her vision of what the garden could be and used this to communicate and gain support.



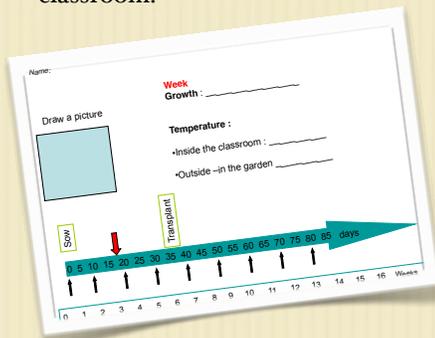
Before - January 2008



Now- September 2010



Every 1st grade student planted tomato plants. They completed individual logs where they tracked things such as germination, growth, and weather. At the end of the project, they sold some of the plants and each child also got a plant to take home. [Click](#) for a copy of the Ocean Knoll Tomato Project Log that Nathalie developed to use in your classroom.



## CURRICULUM CORNER

Given that much of their garden bed materials and soil were donated, Chrissy was able to use a portion of their 2008 State Grant to build their curriculum resources. Their current curriculum resources include:

★ **UC Davis** <http://cns.ucdavis.edu/resources/garden/index.cfm>

*Nutrition to Grow On (Grades 4-6)*

*Eating Healthy from Farm to Fork...Promoting School Wellness (Kindergarten - Grade 2)*

The curriculum uses the garden to integrate disciplines, including science, mathematics, language arts, history, environmental studies, nutrition and health, while reinforcing California Content Standards.

★ **Lifelab** <http://www.lifelab.org/index.php>

*The Growing Classroom - Garden and Nutrition Activity Guide* Activities are aligned

with California Science Content Standards. Topics include soil, plants, cycles, ecology, weather, nutrition, and food systems.

★ **Books**

*Edible Schoolyard: A Universal Idea* by Alice Waters

*Jamie's Food Revolution: Rediscover How to Cook Simple, Delicious, Affordable Meals* by Jamie Oliver

*Teaching Green: The Middle Years* by Tim Grant and Gail Littlejohn

*Pat Welsh's Southern California Gardening: A Month-by-Month Guide* by Pat Welsh

★ **Websites**

Edible Schoolyard [www.edibleschoolyard.org](http://www.edibleschoolyard.org)

Jamie Oliver [www.jamieoliver.com/campaigns/jamies-food-revolution](http://www.jamieoliver.com/campaigns/jamies-food-revolution)

California School Garden Network [www.csgn.org](http://www.csgn.org)

National Gardening Association [www.kidsgardening.org](http://www.kidsgardening.org)

Slow Foods [www.slowfoodsandiego.org](http://www.slowfoodsandiego.org)

Center for Disease Control [www.cdc.gov/nutrition](http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition)

Teaching Green [www.greenteacher.com](http://www.greenteacher.com)

NETWORKING

Nathalie and Chrissy are willing to share their school garden experiences and expertise with other garden coordinators. In April 2010 they hosted the school garden tour for the Master Gardener Teacher Conference. Over 40 teachers visited their garden during this tour.

If you have questions, want to share information, or network with Ocean Knoll School Garden, contact Nathalie at [nathaliebruey@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nathaliebruey@sbcglobal.net)

## MASTER GARDENER INFORMATION

Go to <http://www.mastergardenerssandiego.org>

Click on School Program to request a school garden consultant, check out current grant opportunities, and more.

Click on Go Green to sign up for MG and School Garden Emails.

Email [schoolgardennews@gmail.com](mailto:schoolgardennews@gmail.com) with comments or questions about this newsletter.

