



Rainwater for strawberries, children learn about resources

SMART WATERING CASE STUDY: WEST EYRETON SCHOOL

West Eyreton is an enviro-school which has recently seized an opportunity to further put into practice its commitment to sustainability with a new approach to water harvesting.

When plans were being drawn up for a block extension adding two new senior school classrooms, the Board of Trustees responded to the school's need for four large rain tanks be included in the design to catch rain water running off the new roof.

"It's really important for the children to see what can be done to make sustainable use of our resources," says Jillian Gallagher, principal of West Eyreton School. "Sustainability is part of our curriculum and using water from the rain tanks is another way we can show children how it's simple and useful when put into practice."

"We wanted to enable the kids and the staff working on the grounds to use rainwater for irrigating the gardens or for maintenance," says Deputy Principal, Lisa Duff. "This is not drinking water but the collected water can be put to a huge amount of use on the grounds instead of using mains water. As part of the curriculum the children grow vegetables and this will help them understand what is needed to make our food grow. Our staff can also utilise the captured water for cleaning outside walls and equipment," she says.

As part of tending the veggie patch, children are taught about how to use water responsibly. They can see the relationship between the water which is harvested and then carefully irrigated with small spray irrigators onto their plants to make them grow.

"The children plant fruit and vegetables which they will enjoy eating, so that they are learning about where food comes from and what is needed to produce it," says Lisa. "They have grown strawberries, raspberries, cabbages, lettuces as well as radishes and carrots from seed. The new entrants class is doing a sunflower competition, and have just put their seedlings into the ground and are hand watering.

As part of educating the children about water, the school has been running a project on 'down the drain'. In other words, teaching children that what they put in water eventually goes into the drain and has an impact elsewhere. The school is in the process of getting the children to design bold signage to be put above all the drains on the grounds to raise awareness. "A little fish is the current frontrunner and is helping make the connection between how what we put in our water might affect our fish," says Lisa.

"We are a rural school and water is a key issue in our community," she says. "It's set to be another dry summer and we need to remind our children and families about sensible water use."

"As the waste and water educator in the district, I was incredibly impressed with the school for installing this, and will certainly be showing off to other schools," says Lesley Ottey, Envirowaste Christchurch.



Children at West Eyreton School

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