

St. Francis School Gardens

Goshen, Kentucky

March 2010

At a retreat in the summer of 2006, the St. Francis School Board of Trustees envisioned the creation of an organic children's garden, which would allow St. Francis students to participate in the entire process of growing a wide range of flowers, herbs, fruits, and vegetables. This vision came as part of a movement by the whole St. Francis community to renew the school's commitment to environmental stewardship. After much planning, St. Francis officially dedicated the "Children's Garden" on Earth Day 2007. Since that time, the garden has evolved. Last year the decision was made to make the original garden a Woodland Garden dedicated to herbs, berry bushes, small trees, and perennials and annuals. On a new site, six plots were dug to create a separate vegetable garden.



In its initial year, the vegetable garden yielded a variety of lettuces, squash, beans, carrots, watermelons, cantaloupes, and corn. Grades 2 through 7 have a 30' x 30' plot which they plant and tend from spring to fall. This year the students will germinate seeds in the school's new greenhouse, then transplant the seedlings to the vegetable plots in early May. Most, but not all of the vegetables, will be grown in this way with the ultimate goal of allowing students to participate in the whole cycle of

a plant's growth from seed stage to harvest. The school's youngest children (PK-1) team up with their 8th grade buddies to perform gardening tasks in the Woodland Garden.

Gardening at St. Francis has been a great teaching tool. Through gardening, students have learned about the importance of weeding, the usefulness of worms, the life of a seed, climatic variables, food origins, and nutrition. They have a new awareness of where food comes from and the alternatives to processed food. As they work in the gardens, they use and care for tools and come to understand teamwork. They also reap the benefits of hard work, persistence, and patience. And perhaps even more importantly they learn that gardening can be fun, that working in the dirt can be so satisfying. At St. Francis, gardening has allowed the community to become involved with the land in new and meaningful ways.

