

EAEE5005 SUSTAINABILITY IN THE EARLY YEARS.

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DISCOVER

I am lucky enough to live in an area where there are many walks and in a house with a big garden with fields and a river behind it. This assignment made me question what about children and families who do not have access to gardens, or areas of natural beauty. Therefor I chose to discover what my workplace, a primary school in a town, can give the children this little look into the environment, the plants and creatures in it. We have recently been creating a sensory garden with the help of the children. This has really got the children's attention in regard to the mini beast we have in our garden and the importance of protecting them.

We have also been planting vegetables and flower seeds. The children in my classroom have a range of additional learning needs and some of whom have sensory overload difficulties and other who were petrified of some of the "bugs" in the garden. However, since introducing them to the weird and wonderful world of our garden, almost all are now excited when they come across an insect. And now they understand that they must always put them back where they found them.

Being able to share this experience with the children I work with is important to me.



Exploring the area.

Our school garden has been divided into areas and each class has the responsibility to take care of that area. My classroom created a sensory garden to meet their needs, which they helped design.







It has been created using materials that were being thrown away by local residents such as a garden shed, and a picnic bench. A member of staff was also able to collect old used tyres from a local company which we have used for a range of reasons such as climbing. But also for filling with bark, stones and mud to create environment for insects.

Discovering words for our garden.

We like bugs, And we like bees,

Planting flowers, Saving trees,

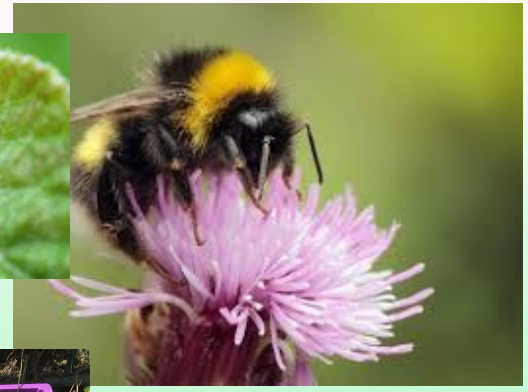
Our garden is pretty, and filled with life,

We look after it with all our might,

Lots of colours where we planted the seeds,

Food sprouting out for the birds, bugs and bees.











A little poem for our children.

Discovering what visits/lives in the garden...











After careful searching and keeping our eyes peeled we found many insects, we were careful to cover them back up once we found them, and also we found some bird feathers. As we are near the seaside we do hear many a seagull. We aren't sure what bird this feather belongs to. We also saw bees and wasps but I wasn't fast enough to take the pictures! Maybe next time.

Exploring plants in our garden and seeing what we planted come alive.

On walking around the garden I can see that the flowers and herbs have really blossomed and is providing the wonderful aroma.






We planted some lavender last year not only for the fragrance but also because in a class activity the children were told by another teacher that bees are drawn to purple flowers.
We often find insects such as woodlice, ants and worms in these plant boxes.
Woodlice are major composters, which means they eat organic waste and make compost! So they can coexist peacefully with worm population.

Whilst some of the plants have been left and grown through the elements with minimal care, however these have still bloomed beautifully, others have been freshly planted and needing of more attention which the children and I will do regularly.
The middle picture is of a shallow pool of water with stones around it. We recently found some fox droppings in the garden, at which point the little pond was dry, we then decided to fill it with some water incase the fox came back and needed water to drink.







Edibles..

Earlier this year the leaks the children had planted had grown big and were ready to be dug up and taken home.

On our tours of the garden we came across some surprising additions to our garden, we found strawberries growing in the long grass and berries growing behind the garden shed!!

What could we plant next?







We had some ideas…

We decided that we would firstly plant tomatoes and some sunflowers as after a discussion worked out that even if the children didn't like the tomatoes, the insects, birds and any animals that come out at night might want to eat them.

Sunflowers were next on the list as we learned that without sun, sunflowers turn to face each other to find heat and light, which we decided made them good friends to each other and perhaps we could try to taste the sunflower seeds once they have fully bloomed.

And some lovely runner beans that we will hopefully be able to eat soon.







We often will ask residents and families for anything they are throwing away that we can use in our garden, rather than buy new. We were really lucky to be given this water butt rain saver and have put in our garden to collect rain water to use on hot days to water our plants. It wasn't something I had previously thought of having, however I think it is a fantastic resource to have especially when thinking about ways to help the environment with global warming which I think is something we should all be thinking about.

With the help of the caretaker and some information from online resources we were able to recreate a small bug hotel. The school caretaker provided the wood and wood glue. After much deliberation we decided that the best place to put the bug hotel was behind the shed where it is colder and damp and has some growing weeds and berries. In the hope that there would be more insects there. We currently have a couple of small spiders in there.
I can honestly say I've always had a phobia but since getting to grips more with the outdoors I have found I am less afraid!



Conservation….

After much research and taking a step back and looking at our garden we decided that instead of making a bird feeder we would like to use old materials to provide shelter and food for the birds.

After searching the internet we were impressed with the idea of using an old boot. We followed the idea from https://www.lushome.com/recycling-boots-original-birdhouses-diy-design-ideas/204028 and used one of the old walking boots I found in my home and an old plastic petrol can that hadn't been used but was just sitting around. It isn't perfect by any means but I do hope to see some birds using it soon.

We put it up on a tree in the quieter, more tree filled area of the school garden to encourage the birds to come and not be frightened away.





Share and Reflect.

I have often hike with my family and enjoy long walks and cycling, however, I probably didn't think of the bigger picture as much as I should have about the natural world and how lucky I am to live in such a natural and beautiful area.

This assignment really made me think and reflect on my lack of contribution to conservation of the natural outside world and the animals that live in it.

I have already began sharing the ideas and ways forward with my colleagues and family and I intend to gently push for these ideas to be shared with our school community.

I am confident that I can use my social media platforms to encourage and educate people on the John Muir award and also the importance of conservation starting within your own back garden or your nearest park.