

EDIBLE GARDEN POLICY

Best Practice – Quality Area 2

PURPOSE

This policy will provide:

- guidelines for incorporating the edible garden into the program
- information regarding the plants to be grown, how the plants will be cared for and how the produce from the garden will be used
- procedures for staff, children and volunteers to ensure that children are appropriately supervised, assisted during gardening experiences ensuring the safety of all participants
- a framework of information for families supporting the benefits and outlining the risks associated with a gardening program in early childhood.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare is committed to:

- Each child reaching their full potential, gender equality, cultural competence; including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and actively promoting these within our programs.
- Providing a stimulating, educational, play-based learning environment that is responsive to the needs and interest of the children.
- Providing spontaneous, creative and positive experiences that encourage children to explore and learn about their natural environment.
- Sustainable practices and environmental awareness
- Supporting children to develop self-discipline through providing clear guidelines for behaviour, communication, encouragement and feedback, as well as positive role modeling from adults.
- Providing a sense of belonging and connection to the service for the children, their families and staff through the natural environment.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to children, parents/guardians, staff, committee members, authorised persons, volunteers and students working on placement.

The edible garden is incorporated into the outdoor environment and therefore applies whenever children are in the outdoor play environment and whenever the produce from the garden is incorporated into the indoor or outdoor program.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

Contact with the outdoors is often limited for many children in modern society, and the vital experience of using the outdoors and being comfortable in nature is being lost. Especially so is the correlation children have between the foods served to them from their kitchen, where that food came from and how it got to them. Educational programs and gardens teach “how a plant goes from a seed to a plate,” (Rahm, 2002 p. 175).

Today’s children lack experience with natural ecosystem complexities. Children live in metropolitan areas that include high density living and no longer do they have experiences in nature. Formal playgrounds or sports fields delimit many children’s natural experiences (Nabhan & Trimble, 1994). The landscape in which children find themselves is the staging ground for their imagination, their story, their sense of their world (Mergen, 2003).

Personal experience and observation of nature are the building blocks for program enrichment (Nanhan & Trimble, 1994). Gardens ground children in growth and decay, predator-prey relations, pollination, carbon cycles, soil morphology, and microbial life: the simple and the complex simultaneously. The clouds, rain, and sun, the seasonal cycle, the insects and local native wildlife that visit the garden, they

teach us about place and country. Gardens bring community together and explore the human interaction with the natural world.

Legislation and Standards includes but is not limited to:

- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety
 - Element 2.1: Each child’s health and physical activity is supported and promoted
 - Element 2.1.2: Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 3: Physical Environment
 - Element 3.2.1: Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child’s participation and to engage every child in quality experience in both built and natural environments
 - Element 3.2.3: The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section in the policy manual.

Adequate supervision: (In relation to this policy) **supervision** entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child in the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children
- number and positioning of educators
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

Approved first aid qualification: A list of approved first aid qualifications, anaphylaxis management and emergency asthma management training is published on the ACECQA website: www.acecqa.gov.au

Hazard: A source or situation with a potential for harm in terms of human injury or ill health, damage to property, damage to the environment or a combination of these.

Risk assessment: (In the context of this policy) a risk assessment must identify and assess any hazard that poses a risk to a child’s health, safety and/or wellbeing and specify how these risks will be managed and/or minimised (Regulation 101). Risk assessments must consider:

- the proposed activity, gardening tools, objects and chemicals that might be used
- any water hazards (refer to *Water Safety Policy*)
- any risks associated with water-based activities (refer to *Water Safety Policy*)
- the number of adults and children participating in the activity
- the number of educators or other responsible adults who will be providing supervision given the level of risk, and whether or not specialised skills are required (e.g. operating power tools)
- the proposed activities, and the impact of this on children with varying levels of ability, additional needs or medical conditions

Edible Garden Activity Risk Management Plan is provided as Attachment 2.

Notifiable incident: An incident involving workplace health and safety that is required by law to be reported to WorkSafe Victoria. Notification is required for incidents that result in death or serious injury/illness, or dangerous occurrences. For a complete list of incidents that must be reported to

WorkSafe Victoria, refer to the *Guide to Incident Notification* on the WorkSafe Victoria website: www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

Serious incident: An incident resulting in the death of a child, or an injury, trauma or illness for which the attention of a registered medical practitioner, emergency services or hospital is sought or should have been sought. This also includes an incident in which a child appears to be missing, cannot be accounted for, is removed from the service in contravention of the regulations or is mistakenly locked in/out of the service premises (Regulation 12). A serious incident should be documented in an *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record* (sample form available on the ACECQA website) as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the incident. The Regulatory Authority (DEECD) must be notified within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (Regulation 176(2)(a)). Records are required to be retained for the periods specified in Regulation 183.

Water hazard: (in relation to this policy) can lead to drowning or non-fatal drowning incidences. Drowning hazards include large bodies of water such as swimming pools, rivers, creeks, dams and ponds. Smaller bodies of water, water containers, pet water bowls and poor drainage which allows water to collect can also present drowning hazards for young children.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources – includes but not limited to:

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:* www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx#keydocuments
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard, ACECQA:* www.acecqa.gov.au and <http://acecqa.gov.au/links-and-resources/national-quality-framework-resources/>
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework:* www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/default.htm
- *The Child in the Garden: An Evaluative Review of the Benefits of School Gardening; Dorothy Blair. The Journal of Environmental Education.*

Service policies

- Curriculum Development Policy
- Administration of First Aid Policy
- Anaphylaxis Policy
- Asthma Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Clothing Policy
- Emergency and Evacuation Policy
- Food Safety Policy
- Hygiene Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Nutrition and Active Play (including Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements)
- Sun Protection Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Water Safety Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Environmental Sustainability Policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Program Participation Policy
- Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy

Emma McLean's edible garden is intended to support young children's learning through active involvement and play. Children will develop their knowledge and understanding that there are plants that bear produce that we can use as food and other plants that do not. For example, the children will be supported by staff to harvest and eat fruit deemed safe from the edible garden. It will also promote awareness that not all plants can be consumed and some are even dangerous if consumed.

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- developing an *Edible Garden Policy* in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff and parents/guardians at the service
- ensuring educators, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, students and others at the service have access to the *Edible Garden Policy* and comply with its requirements
- ensuring that experiences in the edible garden are based on the educational program and meet the needs and interests of children and families (refer to *Curriculum Development Policy*)
- ensuring that there is a clear purpose and educational value to the experiences in the edible garden, and that this is communicated to parents/guardians
- ensuring that proposed experiences in the edible garden are inclusive of all children regardless of their abilities, additional needs or medical conditions (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy, Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy, Asthma Policy, Anaphylaxis Policy, Diabetes Policy and Epilepsy Policy*)
- ensuring that children are adequately supervised (refer to *Definitions*) at all times
- ensure all fertilisers are stored in a place that is not accessible to the children
- ensuring that fertiliser is only used under strict supervision of a staff member and that gloves be worn at all times when using fertiliser.
- ensure measures are taken to reduce the risk of inhalation of any fertilizers (inhalation of dust and/or liquid mist may irritate, inflame or sensitise the nose, throat and lungs, and aggravate pre-existing conditions such as asthma and bronchitis)
- ensuring that parents/guardians, volunteers, students and all adults participating in the edible garden are adequately supervised at all times and are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children (refer to *Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy*)
- ensuring that a risk assessment (refer to *Definitions*) is carried out for any experience in the edible garden (in accordance with Regulation 101) before the activity is carried out
- ensuring the risk assessment (refer to *Definitions*) identifies and assesses the risks, specifies how these will be managed and/or minimised, and includes all details required by Regulation 101 (refer *Edible Garden Activity Risk Management Plan* as attachment 2).

The Nominated Supervisor and other educators are responsible for:

- developing an *Edible Garden Policy* in consultation with the Approved Provider, educators, staff and parents/guardians at the service
- ensuring educators, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, students and others at the service have access to the *Edible Garden Policy* and comply with its requirements
- ensuring that experiences in the edible garden are based on an approved learning framework, the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child (refer to *Curriculum Development Policy*)
- ensuring the purpose and educational value of the edible garden is communicated to parents/guardians
- ensuring that proposed experiences in the edible garden are inclusive of all children regardless of their abilities, additional needs or medical conditions (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy, Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy, Asthma Policy, Anaphylaxis Policy, Diabetes Policy and Epilepsy Policy*)
- ensuring that children are adequately supervised (refer to *Definitions*) at all times

- ensure all fertilisers are stored in a place that is not accessible to the children
- ensuring that fertiliser is only used under strict supervision of a staff member and that gloves be worn at all times when using fertiliser
- ensure measures are taken to reduce the risk of inhalation of fertilizers (inhalation of dust and/or liquid mist may irritate, inflame or sensitise the nose, throat and lungs, and aggravate pre-existing conditions such as asthma and bronchitis)
- ensuring that parents/guardians, volunteers, students and all adults participating in the edible garden are adequately supervised at all times and are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children (refer to *Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy*)
- ensuring that a risk assessment (refer to *Definitions*) is carried out for an experience in the edible garden (in accordance with Regulation 101) before the experience is carried out
- ensuring the risk assessment (refer to *Definitions*) identifies and assesses the risks, specifies how these will be managed and/or minimised, and includes all details required by Regulation 101 (refer Edible Garden Risk Management Plan as attachment 2)
- communicating the purpose and educational value of the edible garden to parents/guardians
- including all children in activities in the edible garden regardless of their abilities, additional needs or medical conditions (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy, Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy, Asthma Policy, Anaphylaxis Policy, Diabetes Policy and Epilepsy Policy*)
- discussing the aims and objectives of the experiences in the edible garden, and items of special interest, with children prior to undertaking.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading and complying with the requirements of this *Edible Garden Policy*
- reading the details of the experiences carried out in the edible garden provided by the service and raising any additional questions
- understanding if they participate in an experience in the edible garden as a volunteer, they will be under the immediate supervision of an educator or the Approved Provider at all times
- supervising and caring for siblings and other children in their care who are not enrolled in the program
- complying with all service policies while participating in the edible garden including the *Code of Conduct Policy, Sun Protection Policy and Hygiene Policy*.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Attachment 1 | Guiding principles of gardening an edible garden |
| Attachment 2 | Edible Garden Activity Risk Management Plan |

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare at a Committee meeting in November 2021

REVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 2024

Attachment 1 - Guiding gardening principles for an edible garden

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to record the factors that have been considered regarding the experiences undertaken in the edible garden and the decisions made as an outcome.

PRINCIPLES

1. Crop Selection

The following factors are considered when deciding on what crops to incorporate:

- Fruits, Herbs and Vegetables

Fruit trees are chosen to support the growing and physical environment supporting seasonal observation.

Fruits like strawberries and tomatoes are chosen to support a shorter cultivation cycle.

Vegetables chosen are those that cultivate quickly and may not require cooking in their preparation for eating. Vegetables such as carrots, potatoes, radish, lettuce, silverbeet, beans, snow peas and herbs like coriander, parsley and mint.

- Fast harvest versus longer growing

Majority of crops chosen are fast growing to keep the children's interest throughout the process. However, some slower growing crops are selected to demonstrate different growing cycles between crops.

- Root crops versus above ground crops

Both root and above ground crops will be selected to demonstrate to the children how crops grow differently. It is mindful that above ground crops keep the interest of the children more easily on a day to day basis as they can see the changes in the plants. However, the mystery of what's happening underground is also some great learning.

- What crops we can incorporate into other kinder experiences?

When selecting crops consideration will be made as to what can be done with the produce.

2. Wear of gloves when gardening

When preparing the vegetable soil for planting, children will wear gloves because of the use of blood and bone as a fertiliser.

When children are working in the "home grown" dirt it is optional whether gloves are worn as dirt is a wonderful sensory experience. The soil has previously been tested and proven to be lacking in impurities.

3. Use of fertilisers in the edible garden

The only fertiliser that will be used is Yates Blood and Bone. A safety data sheet can be found here: <https://go.lupinsys.com/duluxgroup/harms/public/materials/35f7010af1be44e6a8669efe41dafdb8-published/individual>

4. Pest Control

No chemical deterrents will be used on the plants to control pests.

Warm soapy water will be sprayed directly on to the produce as the preferred method for pest control. As an alternative, a seaweed mulch or spray may be used.

Prevention is better than cure so discouraging pests by keeping a healthy garden is the primary method of pest control. Regular observation and removing weak/sick plants, adding compost to the garden and through the use of companion planting (eg marigolds in and around the edible plants to discourage pests) are the tactics that will be used in the edible garden.

5. Gardening tools

Children's metal gardening tools, shovels, rakes etc, will be used by the children, under close supervision by the staff, the tools are more adult like and support the gardening process easier. A maintenance schedule will be used to ensure the tools are kept in good working order and are safe to use.

6. Additional soil

Should additional soil ever be required for the edible garden, Emma McLean staff will consult with Hobson's Bay Council to ensure that the correct procedures are followed to select and import the correct, safe soil.

7. Use of produce grown

Crops will be used in the classroom for intentional educational learning opportunities –developing children's knowledge and understanding of the production of fresh produce.

Growing healthy food and individuals own contribution to the growing process increases knowledge and understanding, therefore encourages individuals to choose more healthy food.

Produce will also be available to the kindergartens immediate community; children's families and staff to take home.

Herbs can be used as sensory experiences to encourage children to feel the different textures of the leaves and smell the different aromas.

Educational Resources

1. <http://www.kiddiegardens.com/index.html>
 - List of poisonous plants and flowers
 - How to grow guides
2. <http://edibleschoolgardens.com.au/>
 - Runs edible school gardens in 20+ Queensland schools
 - Newsletter and competition for gardening resources
3. <http://www.veryediblegardens.com/>
 - Courses, including Primary Schools and Childcare Centres : Customized Workshops
 - Tips on companion planting, composting, worms.
4. <http://healthy-kids.com.au> C-KGKC-Kids-Grow
 - Kids garden resources
 - Food and nutrition information

Attachment 2 – Edible Garden Risk Management Plan

Risk Assessment						
Activity	Hazard identified?	Water Hazards? Yes / No	Risk Assessment (use matrix)	Elimination / Control Measures	Who?	When?
1. Eating our produce	1. Eating non-edible greens	No	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For children to only consume produce when teacher is present Educate children to understand some things in garden will make you unwell if eaten Enforce all produce must be washed as nasty pathogens may be on the produce 	Staff and children	When children are in the outside environment
2. Children using real life like tools to work in garden	1. The tools are metal, and a physical accident could occur causing serious harm	No	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For tools to be used only under teacher supervision The amount of children using the tools will be evaluated by the educator according to the space of use Children to be educated in their correct use 	Staff and children	When children are in the outside environment
3. Frequent watering of plants and vegetables with a hose and children with watering cans	1. Slip factors and water spills	Yes	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children to use watering cans as they only hold a small amount of water Children will be taught how to use the watering cans Children will only use the hose with the direct supervision of an adult Pooling or spillage of water will be broomed away and safety hazard signs displayed until deemed safe for play 	Staff	When children are in the outside environment

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buckets of water will be emptied onto the garden by educators 		
4. Bees attracted to garden because of flowering plants in garden	1. Children touching or being stung/bitten by a bee or another insect	No	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plans displayed of children who are known to be reactive/allergic to insect stings • All staff, students and volunteers to know this information before participating in programs • All staff are trained in first aid management • All staff trained to treat insect stings/bites • Educate children on insect habitats and the need to be cautious of insects, even when not in edible garden 	Staff and children	When children are in the outside environment

Activity	Hazard identified?	Water Hazards? Yes / No	Risk Assessment (use matrix)	Elimination / Control Measures	Who?	When?
5. Possible allergic reaction to unfamiliar plants or produce	1. Children may be exposed to plants or produce in the garden that they've never been in contact with before so staff may be unaware of the child's intolerance	No	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families will be kept informed of plants/produce in the garden so if reaction occurs in the child the parents are aware • Staff will be aware to be alert for early reaction in children • All staff are trained in first aid management • All staff trained on procedures to follow for anaphylaxis and allergic reactions • Back up EpiPen is kept on site at all times in kinder • First Aid Kit is kept on the premises 	Staff and families	When and after children have participated in edible garden experiences
6. Children engaging in outdoor experiences there is greater exposure to the sun	1. Risk of sun exposure and sunburn	No	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children encouraged to drink more/extra water during the warmer weather and extra physical exercise • All children, staff and adults to wear sun hats • Sunscreen reapplied regularly • Children encouraged to engage in experiences in the shade if they have been in the sun for long periods • Children to be appropriately addressed for the weather 	Staff and children	When children are in the outside environment
	2. Greater chance of dehydration					

Plan prepared by:	Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare
Prepared in consultation with:	Children, educators, management, committee, students and volunteers
Communicated to:	Families, children and staff

Reminder: Monitor the effectiveness of controls and change if necessary. Review the risk assessment if an incident or significant change occurs.

Risk Matrix

		Consequence				
		Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Almost Certain	Moderate	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Likely	Moderate	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Possible	Low	Moderate	High	High	Extreme
	Unlikely	Low	Low	Moderate	High	High
	Rare	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	High