

## Coronado Elementary School, Richmond, California

Most students at Coronado Elementary live in apartments, so they experienced many “firsts” as teachers, parents, and community members worked to create their school garden. Principal Linda Cohen recalls student comments while the garden was being created. “I can’t wait to see the garden when it blooms.” “I liked seeing the caterpillar turn into a butterfly.” “The garden looks cool.” “Sometimes I plant flowers with my family, too.”

Smith & Hawken’s donation helped to make this garden program possible, but the school had a lot of details to work through first: fencing the garden area; removing grass and weeds; designing the garden; building raised beds; encouraging teachers, students, and the community to participate; connecting the garden to the curriculum; and maintaining their plantings. The school’s learning curve was steep, but the educational resources



from NGA helped to make the critical garden-to-curriculum connection by providing engaging, hands-on, interdisciplinary classroom activities, “which will undoubtedly improve our test scores as well,” says Cohen.

The garden program has boosted parent participation and pride in the school. It has also offered lessons in earth stewardship and given stu-

dents a place to apply their academic skills in math, science, social studies, ecology, environmental studies, and language arts. First graders planted alfalfa and investigated plant needs in their science journals. Fourth graders honed their math and inquiry skills through plant crowding experiments. Third graders composted fruit and vegetable waste. Over the last few months, students have measured how far apart to plant seedlings, learned about soil composition, studied organic materials and ecology, explored nutrition, and investigated the life cycles of peanuts and butterflies.

As academic testing approached, Cohen noticed that teachers spent less time in the garden. After discussions with the ASG coordinator, the school bought bulbs, flowers, and plants, and Cohen encouraged teachers to take their curriculum into the garden. “These activities were some of the most engaging of the year.” And teachers who planted bulbs were just as enthusiastic as their students when the bulbs finally burst through the soil.

The garden project has transformed a sterile, uninviting section of the schoolyard into a peaceful, inspiring, life-giving area. To honor Earth Day, the principal invited interested Coronado students to plant bulbs with her during lunchtime. “I had no idea I’d have tons of kids lining up to plant — it was a beautiful sight!”

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**ASG PROGRAM SPONSOR**  
for Coronado Elementary



IN THE GARDEN SINCE 1979

*This program provided us with much-needed resources and information.*

*It was a great learning experience for me as an administrator, and I will use the information and resources to expand the project in the future.*

— Linda Cohen, Principal  
Coronado Elementary

**Adopt a School Garden Program**



Adopt a School Garden (ASG) is a program of the National Gardening Association, 1100 Dorset St., South Burlington, VT 05403, (800) 538-7476. To learn more about ASG and the nonprofit National Gardening Association, please visit: [www.garden.org/asg](http://www.garden.org/asg)

# Coronado Elementary School, Richmond, California



*Our gardening would never have been possible without this funding, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity. Planting bulbs and plants to celebrate Earth Day was one of my favorite experiences as the principal of Coronado Elementary School.*

— Linda Cohen, Principal  
Coronado Elementary

Exercise .....7  
Nutrition .....5

The National Gardening Association requires recipient schools in the Adopt a School Garden® program to submit a formal evaluation to capture quantitative and qualitative data on the donation’s impact. The following is a summary of the responses from the **Coronado Elementary School** in Richmond, California.

**Hours per week club members participated in gardening activities:**

Average .....1¾ hours/week  
Program duration .....6 months/year

**Number and age/grade of Garden Club participants:**

Ages 2-5 (pre-K-K) .....30  
Ages 6-8 (gr. 1-3) .....80  
Ages 9-11 (gr. 4-5) .....90

**Demographic information**

African American .....50%  
Latino .....50%

**Program continuation:** .....yes

**Program leader’s estimate of club members’ improvements due to involvement in the garden program. Scale: 0 (no change) to 10 (dramatic response):**

Community spirit .....10  
Enthusiasm for learning .....10  
Environmental stewardship .....8  
Leadership .....8  
Self-confidence .....8  
Social skills .....8  
Volunteerism .....8

**Subjects emphasized in the gardening program:**

- Science
- English
- History
- Math
- Health and Nutrition
- Interdisciplinary
- Social Studies
- Cultural Studies/Issues
- Intra/Interpersonal Relations
- Community Service
- Art

**ASG program award utilization:**

- Coronado Elementary used Smith & Hawken’s donation to obtain the following materials and services:
- annuals, perennials, roses, bulbs
  - seeds
  - potting soil
  - watering cans
  - gardening gloves
  - educational materials

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### Obstacles faced:

The biggest challenge for Coronado Elementary School was to convince teachers that they had time to devote to gardening. Many expressed interest in the project, but were concerned about losing instructional time (especially as statewide testing approached). Also, they didn't know exactly "how" to teach students about gardening and were concerned about discipline issues outside. Rain proved challenging, as well.

### Publicity:

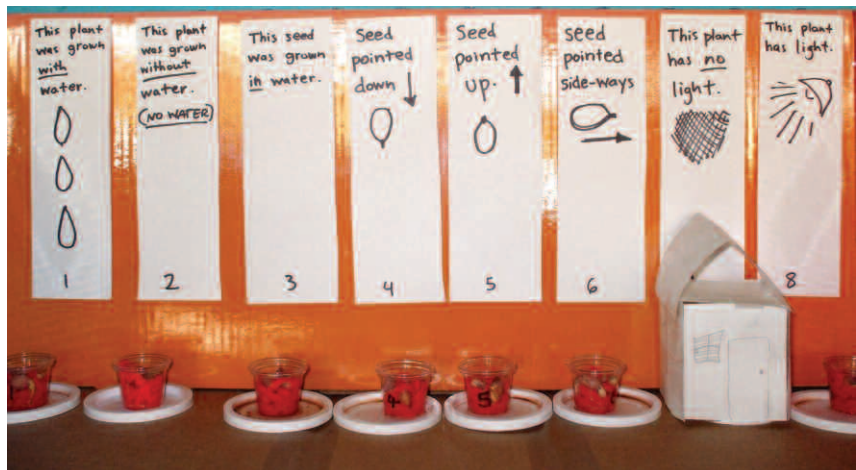
Garden activities at Coronado Elementary were promoted in a local newspaper article and a school district newsletter.

### Financial support for the garden granted in addition to the ASG contribution:

More than \$2,500.

### Approximate value of in-kind donations to garden program:

\$1,000-\$1,500



*The classroom 'science' activities were some of the most engaging activities of the year, and provided students with memories they will never forget.*

— Linda Cohen, Principal, Coronado Elementary

*Many parents have commented that our school looks 'more beautiful' and 'alive' now. They are happy that this program has improved the educational environment for their children.*

— Linda Cohen, Principal  
Coronado Elementary

