

Mira Vista Elementary School, Richmond, California

Seven years ago, Mira Vista Elementary decided to turn a patch of schoolyard asphalt into a garden. This transformed the outdoor space for the children and created an area where teachers and students interact during recess, teachers conduct classes, and kids proudly show off their green thumbs to parents. The school uses organic methods, and mulches beds to minimize irrigation in this drought-prone region. Fruits from 12 varieties of apple trees, three orange trees, three cherry trees, and vegetables from raised planters are shared among students. Teachers use a raised bed to support their classroom studies. The gardens attract members of the school community, and are a retreat for insects, birds, and butterflies.

Despite this idyllic situation, the coordinator has had a tough time getting other teachers to participate and share the workload of the garden. Two years ago, the school underwent major renovations and the gardens were



treated like a construction zone, resulting in the destruction of a Mediterranean garden featuring a mission fig tree, a pollinator garden, and animal habitats. The bees, hummingbirds, and butterflies lost a section of their home, and the students were upset by the ruin of their hard work. During the restoration there were also a few instances of vandalism. The principal wrote about the vandalism in the school newsletter, and the coordinator was relieved to see renewed interest and support from parents as a result.

The Mira Vista gardeners used the ASG funds to replace some of the stolen garden fixtures, like the birdbath and solar fountain pump. They bought netting to exclude gophers, and native drought-resistant plant species to bring back the bees. They also installed drip irrigation, restored the herb garden, and invested in new garden tools (hoses, hoes, shovels, watering wands). Other purchases included a composter, plants, and trees. The school also received a donation from the district to purchase compost and mulch.

Students actively plan, plant, and maintain their gardens. During the restoration they amended the soil and planted a new mission fig and a pomegranate tree. They installed salvia and herbs to bring back the bumble bees, and planted peppers, cucumbers, and tomatoes. They eat oranges and cherries right from the tree. Fifth-graders will organize a school-wide lunch composting program this fall. The coordinator is leaving the school, but has lined up allies to carry on the work, including the custodian (who makes sure the garden gate is locked at night).

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ASG PROGRAM SPONSOR
for Mira Vista School



IN THE GARDEN SINCE 1979



I'm very excited about getting drip irrigation, because we're in a drought and need to be more mindful of our water consumption.

— Michael Watts, teacher

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

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“Students love the beauty of the replanted area, and the produce garden continues to yield (we are eating cherries and oranges right now).”
 — Michael Watts, teacher

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 **Mira Vista School** in Richmond, California.

Hours per week students participated in gardening activities:

Average.....1.5 hours/week
 Program duration10 months/year

Number of Garden Club participants:

Total children involved100

Eligible for free or reduced lunch.....45%

Demographic information

African American45%
 Latino25%
 European American.....20%
 Asian.....10%

Program continuation:yes

Subjects emphasized in the gardening program:

Science
 Physical Education
 Health and Nutrition

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

Environmental stewardship.....8
 Community spirit:.....5
 Exercise5
 Nutrition5
 Social skills2

Publicity:

Garden activities were promoted in the school newsletter.

ASG program award utilization:

Mira Vista used Smith & Hawken’s donation for the following materials and services:

- herbs and other plants
- fruit trees
- gopher netting
- drip irrigation
- solar fountain pump
- birdbath
- composter
- compost curriculum resources

Obstacles faced:

The biggest challenges for Mira Vista are vandalism and encouraging teachers to participate in gardening.

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

Less than \$100.

Approximate value of in-kind donations to garden program:

\$250–\$500