Vegan Education in Schools

Vegan Clubs

Years 7 to 12

Gardening projects

Overview

Gardening projects focused on creating wildlife-friendly spaces allow students to actively contribute to supporting local ecosystems while learning about the importance of biodiversity. By planting native species, setting up birdbaths and building insect hotels, students create a welcoming environment for birds, bees, butterflies and other wildlife. These projects foster environmental stewardship, hands-on learning and a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of nature.

How to start a wildlife-friendly gardening project

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1. Plan the project with a clear goal of supporting wildlife.

- Determine the main objectives of the garden:
    a) Provide food, water and shelter for local wildlife.
    b) Enhance biodiversity on school grounds.
    c) Educate students about native plants and their role in the ecosystem.

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2. Choose a suitable location for the garden.

- Identify a sunny or partially shaded area on school grounds where the garden can thrive.
- Ensure the site has good soil or can accommodate raised garden beds if needed.
- Consider accessibility for students and visibility to encourage interest from the school community.

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3. Select native plants that attract and support local wildlife.

- Research plants native to your region and their benefits for wildlife:
    a) Nectar-rich flowers to attract bees, butterflies and other pollinators.

a) Shrubs and grasses that provide shelter for birds and small animals.

b) Seed-producing plants or fruiting species to feed birds and mammals.

- Examples in Australia:

a) Bottlebrush and grevillea for nectar-feeding birds.

b) Kangaroo grass for ground-dwelling animals.

c) Blue flax lily for insects and small birds.

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4. Include features that cater to different species.

- Add elements that provide food, water and shelter:

a) Birdbaths or shallow dishes of water for drinking and bathing.

b) Insect hotels made from recycled materials like wood, bamboo and bricks.

c) Logs, rocks or leaf piles for lizards, frogs and insects to hide in.

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5. Involve students in the design and creation of the garden.

- Encourage students to sketch garden plans, considering plant placement and features.
- Organise hands-on activities for planting, mulching and building structures like birdbaths and insect hotels.
- Teach basic gardening techniques such as digging, watering and composting.

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6. Educate students about the importance of wildlife-friendly gardens.

- Discuss how gardens support biodiversity and combat environmental challenges:

a) "Why are pollinators essential for ecosystems and food production?"

b) "How do native plants benefit wildlife compared to introduced species?"

c) "What can we do to make our communities more wildlife-friendly?"

7. Add educational signage to make the garden an ongoing learning space.

- Create signs that explain the purpose of different plants and features:
    a) "This birdbath provides water for magpies, honeyeaters and other local species."
    b) "These native flowers attract bees and butterflies, essential pollinators for plants."
- Include facts about the species the garden supports to inform visitors.

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8. Incorporate ongoing maintenance into the project.

- Assign students rotating responsibilities for watering, weeding and monitoring the garden.
- Organise seasonal workshops to refresh the garden, such as planting new species or adding features.
- Teach students about sustainable practices, like composting garden waste or using rainwater for irrigation.

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9. Use the garden as a hub for broader environmental activities.

- Plan additional projects inspired by the garden:
    a) Seed collection and propagation workshops.
    b) Making pollinator-friendly seed bombs to distribute in the community.
    c) Hosting birdwatching or insect-spotting activities to monitor biodiversity.

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10. Celebrate the success of the garden with the school community.

- Host a garden launch event where students can share what they've learned and showcase their work.
- Invite parents, teachers and local community members to visit the garden and learn about its purpose.
- Serve vegan refreshments to highlight the connection between sustainable gardening and vegan living.

Outcomes

- **Support for local wildlife**: The garden provides essential resources for birds, insects and other species, promoting biodiversity.
- **Hands-on learning**: Students gain practical gardening skills and a deeper understanding of ecosystems.
- **Empathy and environmental stewardship**: Working directly with nature fosters a sense of responsibility for protecting the environment.
- **Collaboration and teamwork**: Planning and maintaining the garden encourages teamwork and problem-solving.
- **A lasting legacy**: The garden serves as an ongoing learning resource for the school and a lasting contribution to local wildlife conservation.