

# The Edible Schoolyard

Project continues to match children with gardening



## Food for Thought

Arlene Kroeker

If you haven't seen the community garden at 2631 Westminster Hwy. in Terra Nova, I encourage you to visit. Take a walk through the garden plots and admire the work of dedicated gardeners.

I make my first visit to the garden in mid-September to join chef Ian Lai and his new batch of students for the Edible Schoolyard Project orientation—Grade 3/4 students from Quilchena Elementary and Grade 11/12 girls from Richmond High's Fit for Life class.

It was only last year that Lai pitched his idea—that children get to know where their food comes from—to the schools, looking for people to become involved.

Today, year two of the project, five schools are involved—Spul'ukwuks, Quilchena, West Richmond Kindercare, Gilmore Out of School Care, and Richmond Secondary.

The community rallied around the idea. Richmond Fruit Tree Sharing Project partnered with Lai and donated tools, space and funding. West Coast Seeds donated seeds and the City of Richmond donated space.

While we waited for the students to arrive, Lai showed me photographs of the past year. I see red wheelbarrows in action, rakes, shovels, a harvest table, empty plots, and a whole lot of smiles.

"The kids love getting dirty and lost in the fields," says Lai. "And curious about bugs."

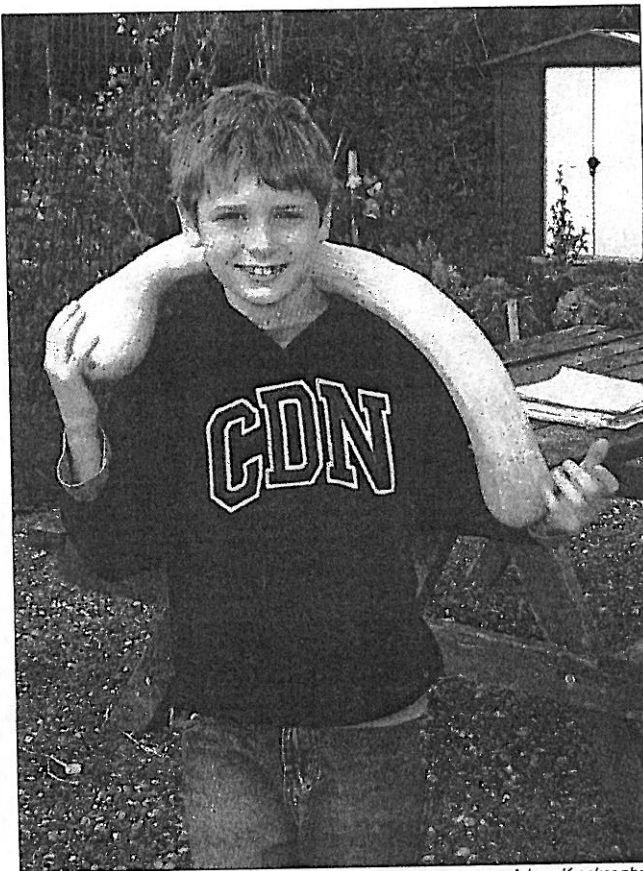
I hear the buzz of excited children as they approach. Lai gives instructions and soon the kids pull and pick beans, carrots, beets, lettuce, and squash, the bounty seeded by the last batch of students.

Kai Kent-Snowsell sets a long, curved squash around his shoulders and it looks like he's carrying a snake. He chews a lettuce leaf and says to his mother Shelley, "We need to get more of this."

She looks at me, "I've been trying to get him to eat greens his entire life."

That's Lai's idea, that children will connect with emotion to food and become lifelong healthy eaters. If it tastes good, they'll want to eat it again.

Lai's passion has translated into him spending 350 volunteer hours building and developing the project on site. There are 10 vegetable garden plots, with one-third of the 300 pounds of harvested produce donated to the Richmond Food Bank, and



Arlene Kroeker photo

**Kai Kent-Snowsell, an Edible Schoolyard Project participant, hauls away a large squash from the Terra Nova community garden.**

a bunch of kids who've learned social responsibility, science, math, wellness, and co-operative learning.

This year students can expect to tour the food bank, a supermarket, and a working farm. Worm bins will be installed in classrooms and a student will be appointed compost captain. Hopefully they will start a blog to plot their progress. When Lai read the journals of last year's students, he was amazed at how they had developed as people through their journey in the garden.

Lai directs the students to the field of oats and shows them how to harvest the oats.

"Hold the stalk with one hand and slide your other hand up to release the oats."

They disperse into the golden field and in no time they have filled a blue bin with oats. After they dry, crush, and winnow them, Lai will make bread.

As the students leave the field, bags of harvested produce in hand, Lai tells them, "Think about what you eat; think about where it was grown." And I believe they will.

Lai needs a digital camera and 10 to 15 yards of manure, so if anyone can help with his request, contact him at 604-767-9264 or check out the website: [www.esy.8k.com](http://www.esy.8k.com).

Lai will cook up a First Nations-themed meal on World Food Day, Oct. 16 from 3 to 7 p.m. at Richmond Cultural Centre. Join in the tastes and celebrations.

Lai's suggestion for the project's harvest:

### Minestrone

*In advance, simmer 1/4 cup soaked white beans in 4 cups chicken stock until tender—reserve the cooking liquid.*

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 rashers (2 slices) bacon diced
- 1/2 carrot chopped fine
- 1/4 onion chopped fine
- 1 rib celery chopped fine
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 1 tsp tomato paste
- 1/4 zucchini large dice
- 1/2 bunch kale or swiss chard, thick stems removed, leaves cut into 1-inch ribbons
- 1/2 red potato medium dice
- 1 cup diced tomatoes

Render bacon in olive oil. Sweat onions, carrot, celery, garlic. Stir in tomato paste. Add bean broth and rest of vegetables. Simmer until tender. Add cooked beans. Season and garnish with grated parmesan cheese and a few red pepper flakes. Yields 1 litre. Serves 4.

Arlene Kroeker writes about food every Thursday in *The Richmond Review*.

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cele-bration | selə'brā shən |

noun  
the action of marking one's pleasure at an occasion by engaging in an enjoyable activity which involves eating; *the engagement for celebration* | *a celebrative feast* etc.  
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verb [intrans.]  
celebrate life among friends: the room was tables celebrating birthdays, anniversaries

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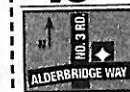


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