



Growing Together at Weledeh!

Weledeh School - Community Garden Education Program

Dear Weledeh Gardeners,

Hope you have been enjoying the warm sunny days of late as much as your gardens! The purpose of this message is to give you each an update about the "Growing Together at Weledeh" school garden program.

The story of the Weledeh Community - School Garden!

The Weledeh Community - School Garden was created as a partnership between Weledeh School and the Yellowknife Community Garden Collective in 2011. Weledeh School offered part of its playground as a space to build a community garden, and the Yellowknife Community Garden Collective built a garden that will always be shared by community gardeners and students!

Since the opening of the Weledeh Garden, students from Weledeh School have been participating in an exciting educational program that supports them in planting and harvesting fruits and vegetables in the "donation quarter" of each community garden plot at the garden. This program is called "Growing Together at Weledeh", and has the following goals:

- Engage Weledeh students and staff in planning and planting vegetable garden plots at the Weledeh School garden, in cooperation with members of the Yellowknife Community Garden Collective and other local gardeners
- Support Weledeh students in developing interest, hands-on skills and confidence in growing a garden.
- Build community by encouraging interaction and learning among Weledeh students and staff and community garden members.
- Encourage inter-generational learning and interaction.

How does the "Growing Together at Weledeh" school garden program work?

The "Growing Together at Weledeh" School Garden Program is an exciting partnership among Weledeh School, Ecology North and the Yellowknife Community Garden Collective, which creates an opportunity each year for 60 to 70 Weledeh School students to plant and harvest a garden with help from volunteer adult garden mentors. We are very appreciative to Ecology North for planning, coordinating and obtaining funding each year to run this valuable program.

For approximately six weeks, from mid-May until the end of June, student gardeners in grades 3 to 6, their teachers and volunteer adult garden mentors gather at the garden once per week to prepare the garden soil, plant and care for gardens in the "donation quarter" of each garden plot. This year the in-school gardening program has been happening on Wednesday mornings. These student garden areas are marked with florescent flagging tape and colourful name tags the students designed themselves.

Students are grouped into teams of 3 to 5 students, and the team of students that have planted a garden in your donation plot are your "garden buddies" for the summer!

The "donation quarter" of your garden plot at Weledeh Garden

Each community garden plot with two gardeners is matched with one team of student gardeners. The student gardeners prepare and plant fruits and vegetables in the "donation quarter" of your garden plot, which is marked with fluorescent flagging tape.

At other Yellowknife Community Garden Collective sites around the City, community gardeners plant vegetables such as potatoes and carrots to donate to local organizations that work to improve food security in Yellowknife.

At Weledeh Garden, the "donation quarter" of your plot is used by students of Weledeh School to plant their gardens. Weledeh students and their families then harvest the vegetables from this donation plot to use for their families and/or in the school lunch program.

As a Weledeh Gardener, you are not required to make further donations of vegetables from your garden to local food security organizations. However, if you find through the summer that you have an abundance of veggies, we always encourage you to share your bounty with the wonderful organizations that strive to help those in need in our community! The list of food donation recipients is on the shed door at the garden. If you are donating in the fall, the Weledeh School Lunch Program is always grateful for fresh fruits and veggies!

What is the role of community gardeners in the Growing Together at Weledeh Program?

Student gardeners are encouraged to continue to come to the garden throughout the summer with their families to water, weed, care for and harvest from their garden plots.

We would also like to kindly request that you please help to maintain the student garden plot that is in your donation quarter throughout the summer, and especially between June 24th and August 26th when school is out for the summer. This care would include the following:

- watering the plot when you water
- weeding
- harvesting and donating produce if your garden buddies and their families are not harvesting etc.

Thank you SO much for your assistance with this, as this help and your participation in this program is what makes it possible! Given that the school year does not jive very well with the gardening season, we are very appreciative of the help from community gardeners to maintain the student garden buddy plots throughout the summer. This is your community donation through the Garden Collective! (-:

I see that there are some large bare patches in my student garden buddies' garden. Can I plant more vegetables in the bare patches?

Yes, please go ahead! Now that the garden season is fully underway, and it is possible to see where student gardeners' seeds are growing, you may notice some bare patches.

Given the great exuberance and excitement that accompanied planting time for the student gardeners, and the fact that in some cases there were 5 wiggly, excited students planting at once in the donation quarter, you may notice that some student garden plots have a few spaces in them where there aren't so many veggies. Please feel free to plant or transplant other vegetables to these spaces if you wish... or to just leave it the way it is if you wish too!

Although the volume of vegetables produced in the student garden plots is not always very high, the amount of hands-on, meaningful learning that occurs at the Weledeh garden is tremendous!

Volunteers with the *Growing Together at Weledeh* program have remarked on meeting students in the street during the summer, and hearing their very excited stories of how they and their families had been eating vegetables they had grown in their gardens!

Questions?

For Weledeh Garden questions, please contact your lovely site managers, Caihla at caihlamacc@gmail.com and Lara at laramountain@gmail.com.

If you have questions related to Weledeh School, please contact our wonderful Weledeh School - Community Garden liaison, Elizabeth Monroe at elizabeth_monroe@mail.ycs.nt.ca or emonroe@theedge.ca

If you have any questions about the Ecology North student garden program, feel free to contact Dawn at 873-6019 / dawn@ecologynorth.ca

Thank you!

Thank you SO much for your participation in this program! It is very much appreciated and the students are very excited to meet and garden with you - their community garden mentors! A big thank you to those of you who were able to help as garden mentors during the in-school portion of this program!

This exciting program would not be possible without you - THANK YOU!

Happy gardening and see you 'round the garden!