

INDIGENOUS GARDEN OPENS AT CARLTON NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Thursday 25 July 2019



Above: Marnie, Charlee and Marlo are helping care for the Young Dark Emu Indigenous Garden.

Kids at Carlton North Primary School are rolling up their sleeves, digging in the dirt, and learning about our natural environment.

They're also discovering the deep connections between horticulture and Aboriginal history and culture. It's all thanks to the school's Young Dark Emu Indigenous Garden and Learning Walk.

The program was inspired by Young Dark Emu, Bruce Pascoe's new book for younger readers that explores the true history of Aboriginal land management and the importance of Indigenous plant species in our local ecology.

Bruce's daughter Marnie played a key role in establishing the garden, and her children, Marlo, Alia and Charlee, are among 290 students contributing to its upkeep.

Born in Richmond, Bruce Pascoe is a Yuin and Bunurong man and Prime Minister's Literary Award winner, who has also worked as a teacher.

"I think all kids need to know about plants and food. They need to know how soil works so they know how to look after Mother Earth," he said.

"So much of what we do in modern life destroys soil. I think we need to understand that Australia is the oldest society on Earth and had deep knowledge of the earth and how to manage and sustain it. Being aware of that will encourage us to maintain the sustainable agricultural practices of Aboriginal people."

The garden is a collaboration between Carlton North Primary School, the Wurundjeri Tribal Council and RMIT.

School principal Rachel Corben has been thrilled by the response from her "excited and passionate" students, and she's equally pleased by the enthusiasm from parents.

"The response from our families and wider school community has been overwhelming and emotional. We have received feedback from families that this is a learning experience that the school community has wanted for a long time," she said.

Will the success of this project lead to similar gardens sprouting up elsewhere?

"It would be fantastic to see similar cultural and biodiversity projects happening at primary schools throughout Victoria, and we hope that our garden might help promote the benefits of celebrating our Indigenous heritage and caring for our environment," Rachel said.

Visit [Carlton North Primary School](#) website to learn more about the Young Dark Emu Indigenous Garden and Learning Walk.

Visit [Magabala Books](#) learn more about Bruce, Young Dark Emu, and his other works.

Good eating

The kids are planting more than 30 different species of Indigenous plant, including lots of delicious edibles.

- Apple Berry (*Billardiera scandens*) is a fleshy yellow fruit
- Bulbine Lily (*Bulbine bulbosa*) produces a corn perfect for roasting
- Nodding Salt-Bush (*Einadia nutans*) produces bright red berries
- Warrigal Greens (*Tetragonia tetragonioides*) is a leafy green vegetable
- Yam Daisy (*Microseris lanceolata*) features nourishing tuberous roots

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations - and to their Elders past, present and future.

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