



Kitchen Garden Program

1. Authorisation

This policy was adopted by the Committee of Armadale Early Learning Centre Inc. at its Committee meeting on [September 10th, 2013](#).

2. Review Date

This policy was reviewed on [September 2013](#). This policy is to be reviewed every [4 years](#) or when deemed necessary. This policy is due to be reviewed [September 2017](#).

3. Scope

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of AELC.

4. Background and Legislations

4.1 Background

The National Food Plan, launched by the Federal Government in May 2013 identifies that Australian children have particularly low levels of food literacy - they lack basic understanding of primary industries and food production. We can address this by teaching children where food comes from and how to produce and prepare it.

Building children's knowledge improves their capacity as future consumers to make healthy food choices.

Participation in activities like community gardening builds understanding about food and production and can shape people's food choices with benefits for their health. For example, participation in community gardening is associated with increased fruit and vegetable intake (Alaimo et al. 2008). It also teaches children how to grow, harvest, prepare and share fresh food.

4.2 Legislations and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulations 77–78, 79–80 (if the service provides food), 168
- *Food Act 1984* (Vic), as amended 2012

- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety*
 - Standard 2.2: Healthy eating and physical activity are embedded in the program for children
 - Element 2.2.1: Healthy eating is promoted and food and drinks provided by the service are nutritious and appropriate for each child
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 3: Physical Environment*
 - Standard 3.3: The service takes an active role in caring for its environment and contributes to a sustainable future.
 - Element 3.3.1: Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations
 - Element 3.3.2: Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment.

5. Definitions

Healthy eating: Describes eating patterns that provide all the recommended nutrients for growth and development, and good health and wellbeing, now and in the future. It also refers to preparing, serving and eating food in a way that recognises its importance as a social and cultural activity.

Kitchen garden: (in relation to this policy) A garden that is developed within or outside kindergarten property for the purpose of educating children about food production and supplying kindergarten kitchens with fresh food to teach cooking skills and serve fresh food to children.

National Food Plan: The Australian Government has developed Australia’s first ever [National Food Plan](#) to help ensure that the government’s food policy settings are right for Australia over the short, medium and long term.

Nutrition: The process of providing or receiving nourishing substances.

Organic growing: describes a food production system that does not use toxic chemicals including synthetic fertilisers and pesticides. It aims to improve the long-term fertility of the soil.

Poisonous plant: a plant that when touched or ingested in sufficient quantity can be harmful or fatal to an organism.

6. Policy

6.1 Values

AELC is committed to providing a Kitchen Garden Program that:

- gives an introduction to and appreciation of fresh seasonal food
- provides socialisation through team work, and sharing a meal
- provides a practical understanding of environmental sustainability
- provides children an opportunity to understand the link between good food choices and optimum health

- develops deeper understandings and tolerance of cultural difference by exposure to other culinary traditions
- develops practical understanding of environmental issues such as soil health, water management, and the importance of plant diversity
- develops better understanding of the relationship between the garden and the table

6.2 Purpose

This policy will provide clear guidelines for the implementation of a Kitchen Garden Program at AELC. The goal is for children to have a greater understanding of where food comes from, how it is harvested, and then prepared into a meal or snack. This will be achieved by implementing a Kitchen Garden program that builds children's knowledge about food.

7. Procedures

Through the Kitchen Garden program, children learn where food comes from and how to grow, harvest and prepare healthy, seasonal, nutritious meals and, most importantly, to sit together to enjoy delicious, fresh food.

This hands-on approach to food education will change the way children approach and think about food, and will provide opportunities for children to learn about the food they eat through the Kitchen Garden program.

The program should include three aspects: (1) Growing / Gardening, (2) Preparing / Cooking, and (3) Sharing.

7.1 Growing/ Gardening

Children can learn new skills, have fun, play and develop self-confidence by spending time in the garden tending plants and growing their own food. Most children enjoy being outdoors and love digging in the soil, getting dirty, creating things and watching plants grow.

The program should address the following learning elements:

- Creativity – finding new and exciting ways to grow food

Children like large, brightly coloured flowers and vegetables that grow quickly. Plants such as sunflowers, corn and pumpkins are good examples.

Consideration should be given to using varieties of plants that have sensory and textural qualities as well. Examples of great sensory plants include:

- Touch – woolly lamb's ear, succulents (such as aloe vera), bottlebrush species, snapdragons
- Taste – basil, strawberries, peas, rosemary, carrots, cherry tomatoes
- Smell – jasmine, sweet peas, lavender, pelargoniums, native mint bush, lemon balm
- Bright colour – daffodils, rainbow chard, marigolds, pansies, sunflowers
- Sound – corn, bamboo and grasses rustle against each other when the wind blows.

- Activities – finding garden activities that suit different ages. Suggestions include:
 - Watering the Garden
 - Digging
 - Picking Flowers
 - Planting vegetables, fruits and flowers in the correct season
 - Picking vegetables and fruits when they are ready to eat
 - Composting, recycling and mulching
 - Weeding
 - Preparing the soil
- Nutrition – learning about where fresh food comes from, and how to use it in the preparation of healthy and nutritious dishes

Please note, there are certain plants that should be avoided due to toxicity.

7.2 Awareness of potential poisons in the environment

- Teach children what they can and cannot eat from the garden. Remind them to wash everything first.
- Be aware of and avoid poisonous parts of plants. All parts of some plants are poisonous including datura, Lily of the Valley, rhododendrons, azaleas, oleander. *Poisonous leaves:* Rhubarb and tomato. Others have poisonous saps, flowers, seeds, fruits or bulbs.
- Test soils for poisons like lead and asbestos if likely. Avoid using things that may contain lead paint.
- Don't use pressure-treated wood, timbers from packing cases, creosote-treated timber or railroad ties for building gardens.
- Garden organically and use natural pest control methods. www.kidsgrow.com.au

Please refer to the Grow me Safely website for a comprehensive list of plants to avoid at <http://www.kidsafensw.org/growplantssafely/#plants-to-avoid>.

7.3 Preparing/ Cooking

By preparing food from the kitchen garden, Children can learn new skills in the kitchen, including:

- Food hygiene
- Safe ways of handling cooking utensils
- Basic food preparation, and organisational skills

The program should address the following elements:

- Preparation
 - Washing hands for hygiene prior to food handling and preparation
 - Kitchen preparation in readiness to cook/prepare
 - Assembly of all kitchen utensils in readiness to cook/ prepare
- Culture
 - Use food to create meals/ snacks from different cultures
 - Allow children to experience new/ different foods and flavours

- Activities
 - Cleaning food
 - Chopping food
 - Learning to measure ingredients
 - Mixing ingredients
 - Assembling / preparing meal/snack
- Nutrition
 - Learning the value of healthy food
 - Understanding importance of fruit and vegetables to diet
 - Preparing healthy food and snacks

7.4 Sharing

Demonstrate to children the social element of meal sharing, by sitting together to enjoy delicious, fresh food once preparation is complete.

7.5 Success Measures

1. An increased appreciation of diverse, healthy food. This may be demonstrated by:
 - willingness to try new foods
 - enjoying trying foods from different cultures
2. An increased enjoyment, knowledge and confidence in relation to growing, preparing, cooking and eating food. Indicators that this has been achieved are:
 - enjoying the kitchen and garden setting
 - a sense of achievement from their 'hard work' in the garden
3. Improvements to the schools social and learning environment. This may be displayed as an increase in:
 - enthusiasm, engagement and confidence
 - teamwork and social skills

7.6 Benefits of the Program

Benefits for children:

- Children learn to love cooking and gardening
- Children cook and eat new foods on a regular basis
- Experience new foods, flavours and textures
- Extend literacy and numeracy learnings into the garden and the kitchen
- Enjoy physical activity
- Learn to cooperate
- Develop social skills
- Learn about different cultures and traditions through food
- Gain a working knowledge of the relationship between garden and table

Benefits for AELC:

- Create a point of engagement and excitement for the AELC community
- Promote wider participation in the kindergarten of parents and grandparents

Benefits for families:

- Enjoy new opportunities to grow, cook and eat food together
- Bring enthusiasm and learning from the Kitchen Garden Program home
- Make more meaningful connections with their school, community and environment

8. Key Responsibilities & Authorities

8.1 Approved Provider

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- ensuring that the service environment and educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating
- providing ongoing information, resources and support to families, to assist in the promotion of optimum health for young children
- ensuring the implementation of adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 77)
- ensuring that all educators/staff comply with the *Food Safety Act*

8.2 Nominated Supervisor

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- ensuring that the Kitchen Garden is being included as part of the programming for the kindergarten groups
- ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating
- ensuring the implementation of adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 77)
- ensuring that all educators/staff comply with the *Food Safety Act*

8.3 Certified Supervisors, Educators and Staff

Certified Supervisors and other educators/staff are responsible for:

- Incorporating the Kitchen Garden into their programming
- Planning appropriate gardening activities
- Removing buckets/containers of water when not in use
- Teaching children to always check with an adult before eating anything from the garden
- Ensuring that children wash hands after gardening
- complying with the service's *Nutrition and Active Play Policy* and with the *Food Safety Act*
- implementing adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children
- ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

9. Circulation Plan

A copy of the Policy will be adopted by the Committee and will be available upon request, in the Policy Manual (located in the AELC foyer), and available on the AELC website www.armadaleelc.vic.edu.au.

10. Resources and Support

10.1 Sources

- Dig In - Creating an edible school garden, http://www.kitchengardens.det.nsw.edu.au/kg/assets/dig_in_guide.pdf
- Grow me Safely, <http://www.kidsafensw.org/growplantssafely/#plants-to-avoid>
- Kitchen Garden, http://www.kitchengardens.det.nsw.edu.au/kg/01_teachers/index.htm
- Kitchen Garden Foundation <http://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au>
- Nursery & Garden Industry Australia – KidsGrow, http://www.ngia.com.au/Category;jsessionid=3BF5D2E8F078A0CA52AE128C58BA9865?Action=View&Category_id=444

10.2 Service Policies

- *Environmental Sustainability Policy*
- *Food Safety Policy*
- *Nutrition and Active Play Policy*

11. Evaluation

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required

12. Attachments

Nil