

Tansley Primary School Grounds and Gardens

1. Gardening Activities, skills and Knowledge

(i) School Grounds

All the children in the school have been involved in planning, developing and maintaining the grounds and gardens at Tansley Primary School. During the summer term of 2009, all children carried out a survey of the grounds: Looking for invertebrates, evidence of vertebrate animals and for different plant species. The children also identified areas of the grounds they liked, disliked, were rich in wildlife or poor in wildlife. From the results of this investigation a plan for the school grounds was produced and implemented.

Date	Action
September 2009	Oaks sow the wildflower meadow
October 2009	Pond restoration by staff
November 2009	Whole School: Bluebell planting & habitat construction (toads and hedgehogs)
November 2009	Elms plant fruit orchard with trees donated by the local nurseries
November 2009	Whole School plant spring bulbs under orchard
December 2009	Sycamores build bird and bat boxes
January 2010	Oaks make bird feeders
January 2010	Whole School planting native trees to create copse
February 2010	Sycamores plant and weave the Willow Dome
March 2010	Elms plant the soft fruit
March 2010	Elms build the Wildlife Hotel
March 2010	Sycamores plant the heath (mini-moorland)
March to May 2010	Whole school sow seeds and plant plugs in vegetable beds prepared by staff
July 2010	Sycamores to weave willow bird hide

(ii) Eco-Schools activities

The Eco-Schools Committee meets around every four weeks. The Committee is made up of two children from each year group (not Reception), a parent, a governor, one teaching and one non-teaching members of staff. Amongst the many things that the Eco-Schools committee and supporters do is to develop the school grounds.

The Eco-Schools committee sowed seeds and raised young plants to sell at our Spring Fair to raise money for our school grounds.

From the Eco-Schools committee and supporters we have our 'Champions' - children who take a lead in a particular activity. We have our 'Tree and Heath Champions', our 'Litter Champions', our 'Vegetable Champions', our 'Indoor Plant Champions' and so on. Any child is welcome to support the Champions at any point. This gives every child the opportunity to join in the gardening and wildlife activities without 'being in the club'.

(iii) Vegetable plots

The school has raised vegetable and soft fruit beds where children can grow fruit and vegetables. An indoor wall display shows how the beds and, indeed all the school grounds, change over the months and shows the crop rotation plan and so on.

2. The Garden's Contribution to Education and the Curriculum

Most subjects are taught outdoors by all three classes either by actively using the environment around them or carrying out work outside.

(i) Early Years Foundation stage

Children in early years use the grounds daily to support learning in all six areas of the Foundation Stage.

(ii) Maths

Maths activities include basic number work (counting, addition) using features in the grounds. Measuring distance, such as length, perimeter and area or capacity, using water, is also done outdoors. Space work, such as using compass points is also done outdoors.

(iii) Literacy

Literacy is taught outdoors on a regular basis. This might involve using the story-telling circle for activities including story-telling or using the plants and outdoors as inspiration for poetry or stories. Sycamore class also used the grounds for the development and ultimately for the performance of 'The Devil and the Three Golden Hairs' - a marvellous story told around the grounds which involved the audience moving around with the cast!

(iv) Science

Science investigation skills, life process and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes are all taught outdoors, using the habitats around us, the materials around us or simply using the space around us. The area 'Life processes and living things' has been a particular focus this year during our 'Grounds for Change' project.

3. Value in Sustaining the Environment and Wildlife

(i) Compost

We have three composting bins where we aim to compost as much plant and natural material as possible.

(ii) Water Collection

We currently have no water collection system, though this will be installed when the drainpipes are replaced next year.

(iii) Wildlife habitats

We have the following habitats and wildlife features:

- Pond
- Badger sett
- Wildflower meadow
- native woodland

- moorland heath
- bird and bat boxes and feeders
- toad and hedgehog boxes
- invertebrate 'hotel'
- bird-hide (due July 2010)

(iv) Wildlife Watching

The children have actively taken part in a range of wildlife observation activities:

- Pond-dipping
- Bird-watching (Big Schools Bird watch)
- Pootering for invertebrates
- Plant collection and identification

4. Growing Fruit and Vegetables and Healthy Eating

We have planted a range of fruit trees in the orchard, some soft fruit plus the vegetables in the raised beds. We also have a fig tree which is bearing fruit. This is the first year we have done this on a 'large' scale. The first of our produce will be cooked and eaten for school dinners and in our Cookery Club.

All infants have fresh fruit for their morning snack.

The 'Let's Get Cooking Club' meets regularly promoting healthy eating often eating local produce and sometime using more exotic foods our children may not be familiar with.

5. Design, Management and Maintenance

(i) Design of Grounds and Gardens

The grounds and gardens were planned with the aesthetic, wildlife and practical management values in mind. Low maintenance, high wildlife value areas were planned away from the school buildings. Play areas were located where children could still be seen by staff. Vegetable plots were built close to the school, tools and water!

(ii) Care and Maintenance

Where safely possible, all children are given the opportunity to get involved with the care and maintenance of the grounds during lunch-time activities. These are increasingly led by the 'Champions' as they gain confidence and expertise. The grounds and gardens were designed for low maintenance during the school holidays. However, the school cleaner (a former ghillie and wildlife enthusiast), will water and weed in rotation with staff coming to work.

(iii) Links to organisations

We have worked closely with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust over the year. The Trust has recently run two training courses in the grounds.

Staff have attended a training course led by Ryton Organic Gardens.

Tansley is rich in plant nurseries who have very kindly offered their help and support.

We are lucky enough that within our parents and staff we have horticulturists, a wildlife trust conservation officer, a former environmental educator. Given the nature of Tansley, we do not expect this 'mix' to greatly change.