

Malcolm X Garden and Cooking Program

We have lots of good food coming out of the soils and going into hungry bellies through our delicious garden class tastings. The garden at Malcolm X is growing healthy minds and healthy kids. This spring, kindergarteners learned about grains by planting wheat in the pizza garden and popping amaranth grains into “elfin” popcorn. We saved the seeds by “tickling” the plants so they fell into our hands.

Kids are constantly coming into the garden asking to make “weedos”. We provide many different kinds of tastings from the garden and the “weedo” is a Malcolm X classic. Students find an edible leaf and walk around the garden to see what to put inside the leaf, then roll it up and eat it like a tiny burrito. Fillings change with the seasons. A weedo might consist of wild edible weeds like chickweed, miner’s lettuce, curly kale, parsley, and borage and calendula flowers, not to mention the ever so famous sour sorrel. Sour sorrel is an all time favorite green in the garden. I saw a kindergartener taking handfuls and putting it in his mouth. He looked at me and said, “I want to make a sandwich as big as the world and put sour sorrel in it.” It brings me great joy seeing all this raw fresh food going into the bellies of these children.

Over the past year, we harvested many pounds of greens, beets and potatoes. Malcolm X students take part in the harvesting and cooking of produce. When the vegetables that

students have watched, tended, and cared for transform into tastings on their plates, they gobble them up with great satisfaction. As one kindergartener put it, “When we grow our food it just tastes better”.

At Malcolm X, we integrate garden lessons with classroom curriculum as much as possible. Kindergarteners learn about patterns, shapes, life cycles, and counting through hands-on garden activities. The 1st graders learn about different continents by taking a trip around the world, exploring the origins of plants found in the garden. Students find out that purple potatoes are from South America while carrots have roots in Asia. The 2nd graders learn about plant families and explore different varieties of fruits by making freshly squeezed orange juice from navel, valencia, and blood oranges. In third grade, students learn about how Native Americans use plants for their healing properties, and in 4th grade, students learn about the 4 R’s: reduce, reuse, recycle and rot.

In the garden classroom, textbook lessons come to life as students observe a butterfly metamorphose and investigate worms as decomposers. Fresh corn is tasted and sensory poetry is created. Throughout the year, we plant the seeds of knowledge and harvest a bountiful crop of lifelong learners.



Students examine a ladybug larvae.



Happily shelling fava beans from the Malcolm X garden.



Students from Ms. Alexander’s class prepare garden beds for summer produce.



Making tortillas in the garden is a popular activity at the annual Nutrition Fair.

Rivka Mason, Garden Instructor