



Winners 2026

[Embargoed until 15 September]

To recognise the tremendous creativity of kitchen gardens in schools and early childhood services of all sizes, the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation is proud to present the 2026 National Kitchen Garden Awards!

With 647 applications, the 27 finalists spanned early childhood services, primary schools and secondary years from both small regional communities and bustling metro hubs across every state and territory.

Please meet our nine winners!

2026 Prize Packs

Close to \$5000 in value will be gifted to each of the nine category winners, containing:

A two-year membership to the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program (new membership or extension).

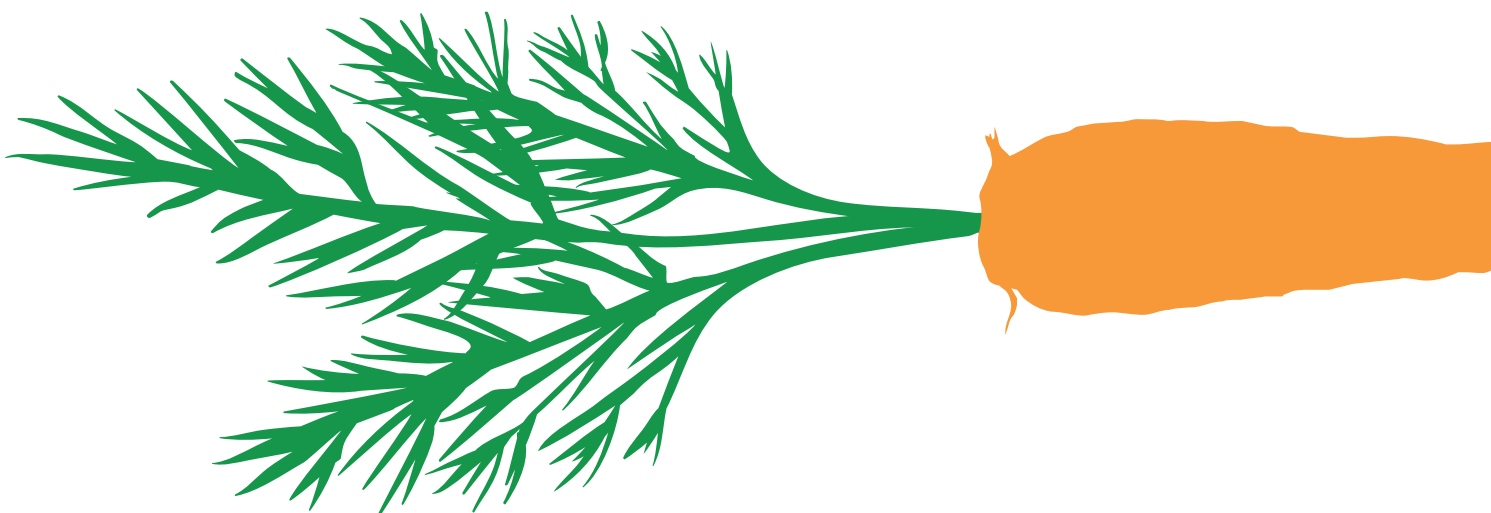
\$1000 kitchen and garden infrastructure grant.

A kitchen garden pack including:

- A WaterUps garden bundle with an Oasis 1680 wicking bed, two square planters, a flexi garden bed cover, and a reservoir level indicator.
- A Herbie's Spices ingredient pack.
- Wiltshire kitchenware.
- A 20 kg crate of JAZZ Apples.
- A Gardening on Country bundle with four Womby hand trowels, four Casso hand forks, four Bandi dibblers and a tote bag.
- Natural, organic garden solutions from Seasol.
- A Worktones voucher.
- 12-month subscription to *ABC Organic Gardener* magazine.
- A signed copy of *Fresh* by Stephanie Alexander.
- A copy of *Your Asian Veggie Patch* by Connie Cao.
- A TigerCorp timber watering can winner's plaque.

2026 Award Categories

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Beyond the Gate

Presented by ABC Gardening Australia Magazine

Show us some great examples of how your kitchen or garden has impacted families and community members around your school or early childhood service. Have your students taken produce to a local market? Have you partnered with a local business or brought in wonderful volunteers?



Category Winner

Beyond the Gate Wongan Hills District High School, WA

"Imagine a small school garden in a rural town in WA where dozens of parents, relatives, community members & even ex-students scramble to volunteer each week; where both primary & high school students are engaged in growing & enterprise, from seed to sale; and where volunteers from across the community donate their time, their plants and their knowledge to help the garden thrive! That school, population 199, is in a very low socio-economic region, where parent & community participation has been slowly dropping over the last few years...that is, until the School Garden came along! Over the last 3 years:

- Members of the local Community Garden have volunteered their time, teaching students new skills and assisting the School Garden coordinator with small infrastructure projects
- Primary school students harvest excess produce to turn into homemade delicacies, such as sweet chilli sauce, quandong jam & basil pesto. High school students work on branding & marketing of the products to sell at the town's annual wildflower festival
- Seeds and seedlings are raised, propagated & sold at school assemblies and to the community, teaching students about enterprise as well as supporting home gardeners
- Local families have supplied horse manure for the garden beds.

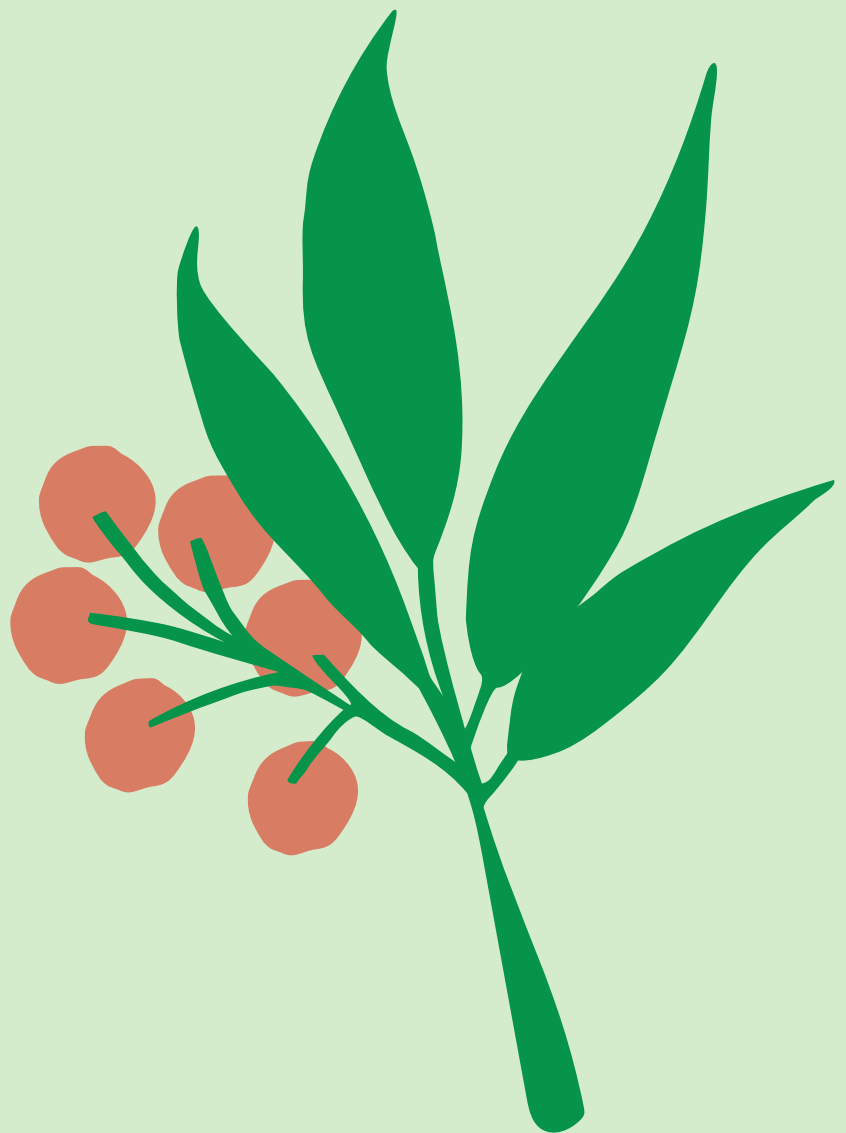
It's not just beyond the gate. It has dismantled the gate."



First Nations Foods

Presented by Gardening on Country

Show us how you're incorporating First Nations knowledge into your kitchen garden learning. Do you grow Australian native ingredients to celebrate culture? Have you connected with First Nations communities to enrich children's understanding of Country?



Category Winner

First Nations Foods St Mary's College P-12, WA

"Our kitchen gardens celebrate the rich knowledge of Country by placing First Nations perspectives at the centre of learning. With more than 70% of our students identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, the gardens provide a meaningful way for students to strengthen cultural identity while supporting literacy, numeracy and sharing knowledge with the wider school community.

Designed, built and cared for by students, our gardens prioritise Australian native bush foods and Kimberley species suited to local conditions. Guided by the Yawuru seasons, students learn that growing on Country means understanding local ecosystems, respecting seasonal cycles and selecting plants that belong in our environment.

Working alongside local Elders and community experts, students explore how different First Nations groups across the Kimberley have traditionally used local plants for food, medicine, tools and cultural practices. The photo below is boabs for pickling. They strengthen literacy by researching, recording and communicating this knowledge through signage, presentations and reflective writing, while numeracy is developed through measuring, weighing harvests, collecting data and planning planting schedules.

Students are not only growing food, they are growing pride, strengthening connections to Country and ensuring First Nations knowledge is valued, celebrated and passed on to future generations."



Kitchen Garden Trailblazer

Presented by Wiltshire

This award recognises an outstanding kitchen garden educator, volunteer or staff member who has shown creativity, dedication and leadership in inspiring children to grow and cook. Tell us about somebody who has created impact in their school or early childhood service.



Category Winner

Kitchen Garden Trailblazer The Village School Gold Coast, QLD

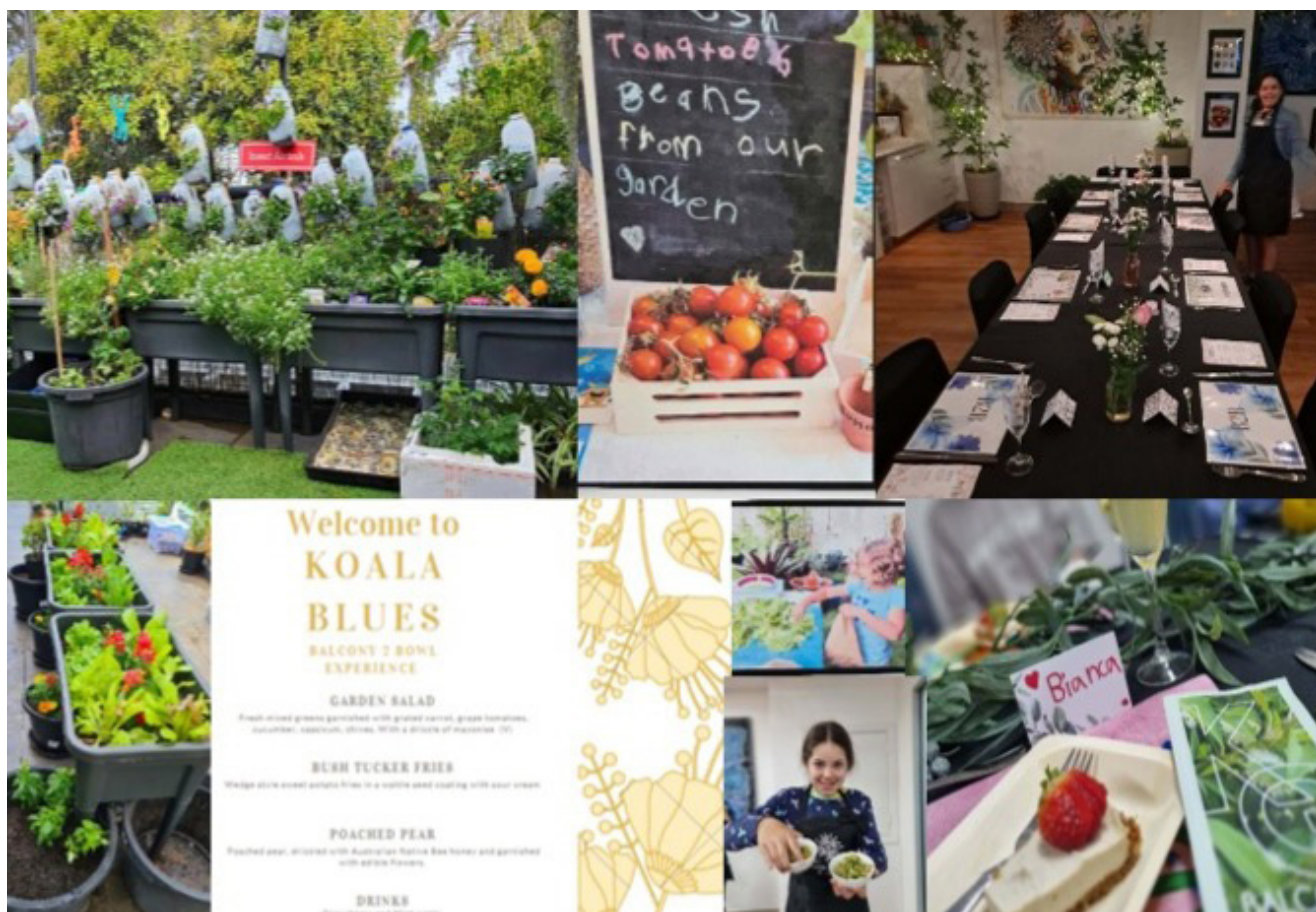
"I would love to nominate Miss B. In our school's first five years, she transformed an empty balcony in the heart of Coolangatta into a thriving kitchen garden and created Balcony to Bowl—a learning experience our children and families will never forget.

Sustainability sits at the heart of our school. Through Balcony to Bowl, each class designs a three-course menu featuring a hero native Australian ingredient. Children grow, tend and harvest the produce while learning about food waste and UN Sustainable Development Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production.

They then transform a room into a restaurant: preparing the food, setting tables for 40 guests, serving meals and drinks to parents, performing music and washing up afterwards.

Through Miss B's creativity, dedication and leadership, children experience the full journey from seed to plate while developing teamwork, confidence, responsibility and pride.

We recently moved 180 metres to a new home, where a larger garden with ocean views awaits—but it is a blank canvas! This \$5,000 prize would help Miss B bring it to life and make the magic happen again for 2027's Balcony to Bowl, ensuring the program can continue to inspire our children to grow, cook and care for our planet."



Recipe of the Imagination

Presented by Herbie's Spices

We want to see your most delicious recipes using fresh, seasonal produce from your kitchen garden, whether it's a twist on a classic or something completely new. Show us how you're inspiring young cooks to explore cultures, taste new flavours, and experiment with herbs, spices and ingredients.



**Category
Winner**

**Recipe of the Imagination
Aldavilla Public School, NSW**

"Humble Warrigal Greens have become a real success story in our kitchen garden. It was actually the first crop we planted when I arrived at Aldavilla, and has far exceeded any expectations. They thrive in our Kempsey climate, cope well with local pests, and provide a steady harvest for our cooking classes all season long.

Our garden grown Warrigal Greens have become one of our most treasured harvests, used in place of spinach every time we cook. We make dips, pasta sauces, pasta, pastries and more. This year, students trialled our first Warrigal Greens Wraps for both our Mexican cooking unit and our Indigenous Fusion unit.

This recipe showcases the best of what we do: Making the most of what ingredients thrive in our garden while giving students the confidence to experiment with new tastes."



Showcasing STEM

Presented by Seasol

Grab your clipboard and get curious! If your kitchen garden is a living lab where children explore real-world science, technology, engineering and maths, we want to hear from you. Do you measure and design garden beds, calculate seasonal yields, track plant growth, or experiment with fermentation in the kitchen?



Category Winner

Showcasing STEM Springhurst Primary School, VIC

"When a week of 40°C+ temperatures devastated our school garden, students were faced with a real-world problem: How could we rebuild our garden to be more resilient and sustainable? Rather than seeing the heatwave as a setback, students became scientists, engineers and designers. They investigated why some plants survived while others didn't, saving Tommy Toe tomato seeds to preserve future crops while learning about plant lifecycles, germination and seed viability. They explored water conservation by investigating how wicking systems work through a simple capillary action experiment before installing a WaterUps planter to support future herb production.

Students also tackled another challenge, how to protect future broad bean crops from strong winds. After collecting fallen branches from around the school following summer storms, they worked collaboratively to design and construct sturdy teepee supports, testing different arrangements to create structures that would withstand the weather while using only reclaimed natural materials. Mathematics was embedded throughout the project as students counted and divided seeds, researched commercial seed packets, compared prices and planned seed sales to fund future gardening projects.

From environmental challenge came authentic STEM learning. Students investigated, designed, tested, evaluated and refined solutions with a genuine purpose, discovering that innovation begins with curiosity and grows through collaboration."



Sustainable Solutions

Presented by Costa Group

Share some of the ways you've learned about sustainability, climate change and preventive practices in the kitchen or garden. Are you composting, recycling, reusing, or reducing? Have you minimised food waste with pro pickling and preserving?



Category Winner

Sustainable Solutions Bungwahl Public School, NSW

"Our school sits in the bush and runs entirely on rainwater, so sustainability isn't a topic; it's how we survive. In the garden, students plant comfrey and sugar cane for compost, grow bush tucker, and fill the beds with flowers for bees and butterflies. We plant by the moon and follow permaculture principles, avoid all chemicals and pesticides, and let the land—and the moon—teach us what to grow next.

Nothing is wasted: bones become stock, citrus peels and vinegar become cleaner, and surplus greens become pesto, ferments and jam, stored in an upcycled jar. Everything else is composted, including playground scraps. We avoid cling wrap, industrial seed oils and refined sugar, and always cook a vegan version. What we can't eat, we sell or donate, then reinvest the money into the garden. Our connection with the Great Lakes Food Trail strengthens links to local, sustainable food and community learning. By growing, preserving and sharing our own food, we're building real big food security in a small way.

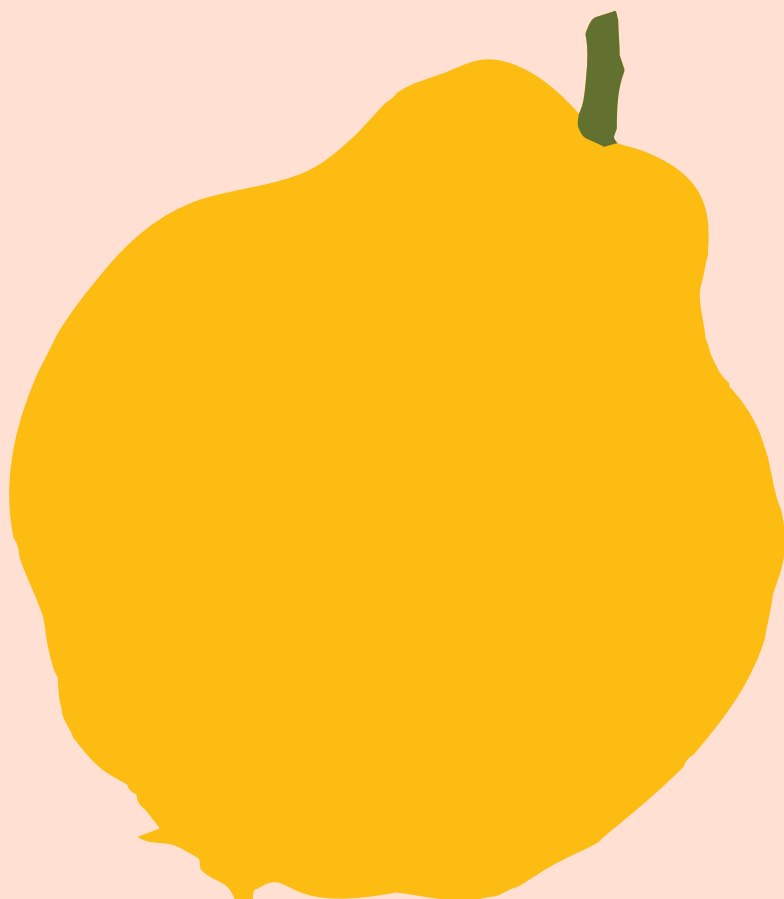
By the end of each day, the empty plates tell the story: these kids aren't just learning about sustainability, they're living it. They leave with dirt on their hands, new flavours on their tongues, and a deep pride in what they've grown, cooked and shared together."



The Art of Kitchen Gardening

Presented by MSP Compass

The sights, smells, textures and stories of the kitchen garden are full of inspiration. Show us how you're using nature and food to inspire creativity, self-expression and artistic exploration. Have children created garden mosaics, nature-inspired sculptures, botanical prints, food photography or song?



Category Winner

The Art of Kitchen Gardening Manning Gardens Public School, NSW

"At Manning Gardens Public School, creativity begins long before the paintbrush touches the page. Every visit to our kitchen garden invites students to slow down, observe and connect with the colours, textures, sounds and stories that surround them. Nestled on Biripi Country, the garden has become a place where nature inspires imagination and every child discovers their own unique way of expressing what they see, feel and value.

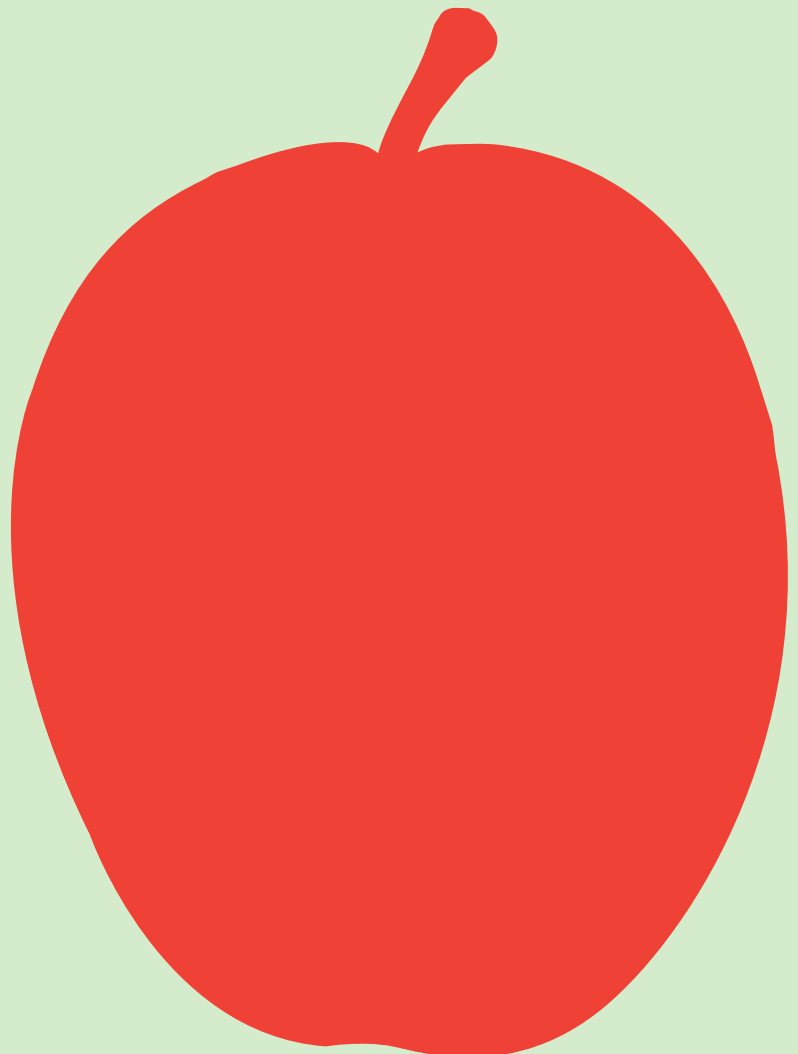
Guided by our Gatha-y minya djaga-gi journey and the principles of the 8 Ways of Aboriginal Learning, students transform their experiences into meaningful works of art through painting, photography, storytelling, sculpture, weaving, natural materials and visual journals. They learn that creativity is more than producing beautiful artwork - it is a way of honouring Country, celebrating culture and sharing personal stories. Seasonal changes become inspiration for colour palettes. Leaves, seeds and flowers become artistic tools. Harvests become photography subjects. Every creative experience strengthens observation, confidence and a deeper appreciation for the beauty of the natural world. Our kitchen garden reminds students that art doesn't begin in the classroom - it begins by noticing, wondering and finding beauty in the world around them. Because every garden tells a story, and every child deserves the opportunity to tell theirs."



The Next Crop

Presented by JAZZ Apples

Celebrate the next crop of budding chefs, green thumbs or student-run clubs. This award recognises young leaders who are showing passion or innovation in the kitchen or garden. Tell us about a kitchen garden enthusiast or team. Perhaps they're the first to volunteer for watering duties, experiment with creative flavour pairings, or bring clever ideas to garden design.



Category Winner

The Next Crop Alawa Primary School, NT

"Our Farm Monitor program celebrates students whose passion for the garden inspires our entire community. Every year, students apply for these sought-after leadership positions, giving up their lunch breaks to mentor younger children during our lunchtime Open Farm sessions. They teach younger students how to move safely around the gardens, care for animals, collect eggs, harvest produce and always lend a hand to complete projects that make our farm a better place.

Our Farm Monitors are proud ambassadors for our Kitchen Garden Program. They represent our school at assemblies, speak on local radio, work alongside experts like entomologists of the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy, and build stronger community partnerships. This year, their leadership extended beyond the school gates. They learnt the skills of animal handling and proudly exhibited our goats at the Royal Darwin Show, leading them in the Grand Parade and helping present our fruit and vegetables in the junior produce competition.

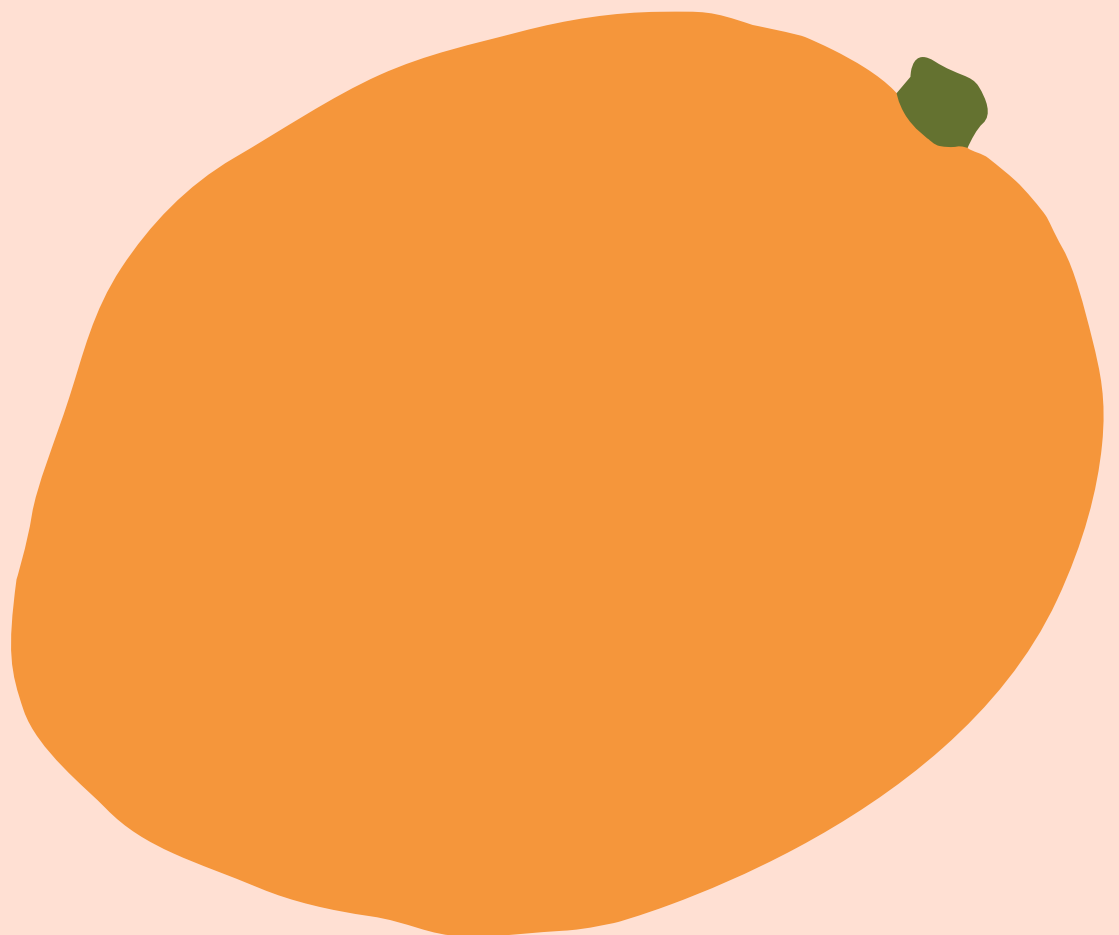
Some of our most dedicated Farm Monitors are not the students who usually receive academic awards. The Kitchen Garden Program gives them a place to discover their strengths, grow in confidence and become leaders. They embody our school values of Respect, Encouragement, Pride and Personal Best, proving that the next generation of changemakers is already growing in our garden."



Wellbeing Champions

Presented by ABC Organic Gardener Magazine

We know getting hands-on in the kitchen and garden is great for our mental health, fitness and wellbeing. Show us a kitchen or garden activity that has improved the wellbeing of children. Does your garden offer a space to reflect and connect? Do you gather around a table to share delicious, inclusive meals and conversation?



Category Winner

Wellbeing Champions Devonshire Street Childrens Centre, NSW

"We would like to introduce our intergenerational vegetable garden. Our centre is located in the heart of Chatswood, one of the most culturally, socially, and economically diverse communities in Sydney.

Many of our families are from overseas and are separated from their extended families. The absence of grandparents and community mentors can lead to a loss of culture, history, and heritage, making it difficult for children to develop a strong connection to their background and community. While children build relationships through early childhood settings, senior migrants often face challenges settling into a new community, which may lead to isolation and poor mental wellbeing.

Our teaching team observed this over many years, which inspired the development of our intergenerational garden project. We invited grandparents to participate, and they have taken turns visiting the centre to help children plant and care for vegetables. The grandparents share their gardening knowledge, cultural experiences, and practical skills, helping children learn how to nurture plants and appreciate where food comes from.

Through this project, grandparents feel connected to the children and the wider community by sharing their knowledge and experiences. Children greatly enjoy these visits and have formed meaningful relationships with the seniors. This project has been running successfully for several years, and we look forward to expanding it further this spring."



We hope you enjoyed these stories of kitchen garden teaching that capture the spirit and enthusiasm of budding green thumbs, emerging community leaders and passionate educators striving to leave a positive impact on the children and young people they teach.

Thank you to our award category sponsors



Thank you to our prize sponsors





The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways where we live, learn, garden and grow. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Elders past and present.