



Media Release:

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How Do You Get Children To Eat Their Greens? Let Them Grow Their Own!

The home organic gardening boom is moving into the early education sector, with young children in hundreds of Goodstart Childcare centres set to find out if they have green fingers.

The junior gardeners will learn about urban agriculture and even get to taste their own produce as part of their early educational experience, all thanks to a new project announced between the Australia-wide Goodstart Childcare group and Brisbane-based Cityfood Growers.

Founder of Cityfood Growers, Peter Kearney, described the project as being crucial for the development of children and important for the wider community too: 'We're hoping some mighty broccoli eaters will grow from tiny sprouts.'

The agreement between the GoodStart board and Mr Kearney will see food gardening integrated into the operation and curriculum of GoodStart's early education centres, using the organic gardening educational materials and strategies developed by Cityfood Growers.

Mr Kearney's organic gardening website, which provides locally-tailored guidance to clients around Australia, was a finalist in the recent Queensland Premiers' ClimateSmart Awards for services to sustainability. He said the project would act as a "catalyst for cultural change" in the GoodStart centres' local communities.

"One of the key aims of the project is to provide relevant information that creates a catalyst for food gardening to start blossoming within the GoodStart environments," he said.

He added that he believed food growing techniques needed to be taught to children at an early age, in order that they gain an important understanding of the origin of their food and how practical and enjoyable it can be to care for their environment via a food garden.

The sustainable and community development nature of the partnership was reinforced by Tara Harnett, Quality Manager at GoodStart. Ms Harnett said she believed there will be a number of ways in which the food gardening knowledge will be shared.

“We certainly see the learning from children being shared directly with families and the wider community. This will not only occur through conversations with families and forums, but also through sharing opportunities such as community gardens and networking with support agencies, allied health services and the formal school community.”

She added that children will be taught to understand the environment through the food gardens.

“...The gardens will be designed in a way that provides an opportunity for children to dig, plant, harvest and eat their own produce,” she explained. “This will foster in children an understanding of the world around them and promote respect for the natural environment.”

Ms Harnett said that “Educators will encourage children to taste the food and share what they have grown with others. An awareness of environmental sustainability will be encouraged through participation in recycling programs and experiences such as composting bins, worm farming and mulching.”

The GoodStart contract strengthens the urban agriculture consulting services of Cityfood Growers' business and adds to the release of a food gardening knowledge platform in March 2011 to [C&K Early Childhood](#) in Queensland. These two contracts enable the company to support food gardening in over 1000 early childhood services across Australia with more than 60,000 families.

Background:

[Cityfood Growers](#) was established in 2007 with the aim of providing people with “services and knowledge to support the transformation of our food system to be more local and organic.” Its interactive web site can be localised to anywhere in Australia and is the largest [online organic gardening resource](#) in Australia used by home food gardeners, hobby farmers and schools.

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[GoodStart](#), through its network of approximately 650 centres, provides high quality, accessible, affordable, community-connected childcare that promotes children’s development and learning. With centres in each State and Territory of Australia, GoodStart is uniquely placed to drive greater collaboration across the childcare sector, by reaching out to government and policy makers, academics, other childcare providers and parent and community groups.

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