



Beagle Bay student Fidalis Augustine and groundsman Ala Howard in the Sacred Heart School vegetable garden, WA.

Beagle Bay's edible gardens

In Beagle Bay, students are using the abundance of sunshine and rain to grow vegetables and make healthy meals.

Just over 120 kilometres north of Broome on Western Australia's Dampier Peninsula, the small Aboriginal community of Beagle Bay is a great place to grow vegetables. That's one of the reasons why the local Sacred Heart School has joined forces with the Edge of Nowhere Foundation (EON) to set up a thriving veggie patch.

"Everybody helps out; we've got eggplant, tomatoes, corn, zucchini, strawberries, peanuts and sweet potatoes for the wet season until we put more veggies in next year," Nyul Nyul language group groundsman Ala Howard says of the school's 600 square metre patch.

"We get the students planting seedlings, watering them, weeding them, picking them and cooking with them. The kids are happy to see plants growing, fruits coming out and veggies coming along. Before they just saw veggies at the shop when they went shopping with their parents."

Howard says while the local shop gets vegetables delivered from Broome once a week, they are expensive. "An eggplant costs \$5. It's much better if we grow it by ourselves."

He is working towards attaining a horticulture degree and eventually wants to help people to set up their own veggie patches.

"The idea is that we will be able to go out and build a small veggie patch in people's backyards and it will be up to the family to maintain them. Because of the rich soil, great sunlight and lots of water, hopefully families will be growing their own fruit and veggies in their own homes."

EON has already set up patches in partnership with eight West Kimberley communities and has nine more on the waiting list. A large garden patch costs around \$200,000 over three years to establish and run. But EON believes the savings in preventing diseases such as diabetes means it's a very good investment.

"Access to fresh fruit and vegetables is critical for a nutritious healthy diet. If there is fresh fruit available it's often unaffordable in remote places," EON chair Caroline de Mori says.

"The gardens are so visual and practical and the rewards are quite instant. Children are eating the fresh produce within two months of planting the first seedlings. They love it – it tastes a lot better when you've grown it yourself."

For more information about EON visit www.eon.org.au