



# *Dig In!* by Bronwen Wall

*Two, four, six, eight. Dig in, don't wait ...*

And that's just what these students at Cannons Creek School in Porirua do every Thursday morning in their "Garden to Table" class. The students slide on their gumboots, pull on gardening gloves, and grab their gardening tools, ready to start work in their school garden.

They dig and they pull, they snip and they hoe, they water, weed, and **mulch** to help their plants to grow. The students grow vegetables, fruit, and **herbs** in the school's garden. And when the plants have grown, the students get to eat them!



## What is "Garden to Table"?

Garden to Table is a programme that helps students learn how to look after plants in their school garden. The students also find out about healthy eating and how to cook tasty meals using the plants they grow. Teachers and volunteers from the local community help with the programme. Many New Zealand schools take part in Garden to Table.



Krimzin and Charlotte are finding out about this kohlrabi plant.

## Busy in the garden

At Cannons Creek School, classes take turns to work in the garden and the kitchen each week. They learn lots of things as they work in their garden. They learn about the seasons and the things that plants need to live and grow. They learn how much it costs to grow vegetables and how much it costs to buy vegetables from a shop.

Charlotte and Breana plant lettuce seeds in the greenhouse. Breana sprinkles the seeds into a seed tray and covers them with a thin layer of soil. Then Charlotte waters the soil. Now they must wait for the seeds to grow.



◀ *A packet of lettuce seeds from the garden centre costs only a little more than one lettuce from the supermarket, but one packet has enough seeds to grow lots of lettuces.*



The students also learn how to improve the soil. Compost provides food for the soil and helps the plants to grow. It is made when plant waste and other material is heaped in a pile and left to rot.

The students add grass clippings, food scraps, and paper to the compost pile. Then they dig into the pile and turn the compost over to give it air and mix it together.

There are bugs and worms that like to live in compost heaps. They help to change the waste into good compost more quickly.



The students grow potatoes, carrots, broccoli, and strawberries, and they have planted apple and feijoa trees as well.

Sometimes the students grow plants that none of them have ever heard of before.



Ashley and Saint are busy at the compost heap all morning.



◀ *This compost will help our vegetables grow big. A healthy compost smells good. It is full of worms and good bugs, and it's crumbly and light.*



◀ *We've been growing kohlrabi in our garden. I'd never seen kohlrabi before. I don't know what it tastes like yet. My favourite vegetable is beetroot.*

*It will take about four months ▶ for this compost to be ready to put round our plants.*



*My favourite vegetable ▶ is potato. That's pateta in Samoan!*







## Cooking up a storm

The students also learn how to work as a team. Some days, they are busy digging in the garden, but on other days, they are busy in the kitchen, making lunch for everyone to share. They wash their hands, tie back their hair, and pull on aprons to cover their clothes. Now they are ready to start cooking. They chop and grate and stir and pour.

When the lunch is cooked, the students call in their classmates from the garden. They wash their hands, and everyone sits down at the tables.

*Potatoes and carrots ► are both root vegetables. You can peel them if you want, but you don't have to.*



Breana tells everyone about the menu. Then Jade tells everyone facts about the vegetables that came from their garden.

Some of the students bring out the plates of food. It looks good, and it smells great! Saint thanks everyone for all their good work in the garden and in the kitchen. He thanks the parents and other volunteers who have helped, too.

Then everyone stops talking. They close their eyes, and Saint says the karakia.

Now, it's time to dig in!



## Glossary

**herbs** - plants with leaves, seeds, or flowers that are used to make food more tasty. Some herbs are also used as medicines or in perfumes.

**mulch** - a layer of bark, leaves, or compost that is spread over the soil like a blanket. It stops the roots of plants from getting too hot or too cold and helps hold water in the soil.

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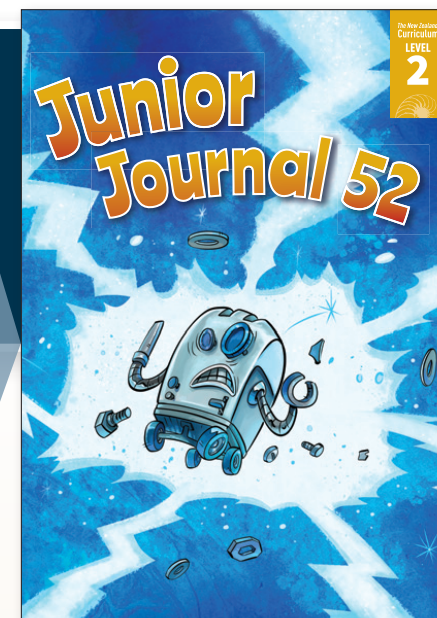


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