

JALA PEO NEWSLETTER

"Plant the Seed"

News from the National Steering Committee

BY DESIREE STOREY

During this second quarter, the scope and magnitude of COVID-19 continued to scale rapidly, resulting in school closures in both March and mid-July . These disruptions to the school academic year have naturally created challenges for schools, communities and the Jala Peo School Food and Nutrition Garden Initiative.

In his address on 9 April 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa encouraged us to "draw on our proven capacity for innovation and creativity, our ability to come together in a crisis, and our commitment to each other and our common future". We as the Jala Peo Steering Committee are so very proud to report that the pandemic has been a strong driver of creativity and innovation, and our Provincial Coordinators and Forums have shared positive stories of resilience and continuity in our school food gardens across all three districts.

We are excited too that conversations about gardening for food have picked up steam around the world with both grassroots and government initiatives taking hold. If South Africans feel encouraged to grow food, their home-grown produce will take the pressure off the food supply system and provide people with purpose and income. Apart from growing fresh food to relieve food security issues, food gardens are a great way to boost morale. It is empowering to plant a seed and watch it grow until it is ready to harvest and eat. It's a way of taking back control over our lives and become self-reliant.

This all begins in our primary schools, teaching our young children how to appreciate and use the earth for food security and poverty alleviation. The Project Coordinators are true ambassadors of resilience as the Forums navigate and embrace the challenges and importance of the role that they play at this time to educate, mentor, inspire and empower teachers, learners and their communities on how to use the earth for future food security.

We hope you enjoy the inspirational stories of resilience and innovation shown by the teachers, learners and communities shared in this newsletter edition. To you and all your loved ones – stay safe and well!



THE LOVE OF GARDENING IS A SEED ONCE SOWN THAT NEVER DIES.

Gertrude Jekyll



This issue:

News from the National Steering Committee

Page 01

News from the Western Cape

Page 02

News from the Free State

Page 02

News from Limpopo

Page 03

Curriculum Integration Resources

Page 04

Coronavirus Awareness

Page 04

News from the Western Cape

SUNET ANDERSON, WEST COAST DISTRICT COORDINATOR



Bitterfontein PS shared their produce with the local school community



Learners planting seed in their homestead garden

WEST COAST SCHOOLS SHOW RESILIENCE WITH FOOD GARDENS

The COVID-19 crisis brought many challenges worldwide and no less to schools to upkeep their food and nutrition gardens. Schools in the West Coast showed their resilience by maintaining their gardens throughout the national lockdown. This resilience and perseverance indicates that school food gardens are regarded as a very important part of what schools do. As the National School Nutrition Programme continued in the Western Cape throughout the lockdown, produce from gardens could be used in the preparation of meals. The community also turned to schools for food in this time of financial hardship for many. Schools could help in some cases by making produce available to the school communities.

The pandemic and resultant lockdown led to communities becoming aware of the value of self-sustenance by means of food gardens. At St. Boniface Primary School a community garden was started as an extension of their school food garden.

The lockdown also provided the opportunity to encourage learners to start their own homestead gardens whilst being restricted to staying indoors. Seed parcels containing winter seeds, fertilizer and a basic instruction sheet were sent to more than 500 learners in the community. It is clear from photos received that they are thoroughly enjoying the gardening!



Chinese proverb

News from the Free State

NELLY KOMAPE, FEZILE DABI DISTRICT COORDINATOR

GROWTH DURING LOCKDOWN

Almost all school gardens did not survive the lockdown period in the Fezile Dabi district, however there are a few exceptional stories to be shared. Boiphihlelo Secondary School had no garden since the inception of the Jala Peo Project because a building project was taking place at the identified space for the school food and nutrition garden. The CWP team hired a grader in January 2020 to prepare the space but all efforts collapsed when the lockdown commenced at the end of March 2020. During the lockdown, a team of four community members approached the principal of Boiphihlelo to continue with the garden activities. The team prepared the garden, planted seedlings and continued to take care of the crops during the lockdown to date. The garden currently has spinach, beetroot, mustard, morogo and onions. When the provincial coordinator met with this group's team leader, Mr Sethabela, he had said that they would continue to work in the garden and also share what they have harvested from the garden with the school. The team was also willing to work with the learners to transfer their knowledge.

At Chris Van Niekerk Primary, the school's garden was thriving before lockdown. The school managed to harvest vegetable parcels for 15 families during lockdown, consisting of tomatoes, spinach, onion, green beans, carrots, cabbage, beetroot and brinjal. The garden at Mokwallo Primary had a few crops that survived the lockdown, including carrots, spinach, onion and beetroot. Learners harvested the carrots which they took to the school kitchen to be included in their meals.



Above: Harvesting at Mokwallo Primary



Above: Crops at Boiphihlelo Secondary School during the lockdown

News from Limpopo

DR RONALD MUDIMELI, VHEMBE DISTRICT COORDINATOR

STRATEGIES FOR CONTINUATION OF SCHOOL FOOD GARDENS DURING LOCKDOWN

With the sudden announcement of the national lockdown, all educators and support staff were compelled to vacate school premises, except security officials who were considered essential workers. The majority of Jala Peo schools in Limpopo cannot afford to hire security officers hence, no one was present at those schools during levels 4 and 5 of the lockdown. Consequently, the school gardens were mostly left unattended. In addition to limited access into the gardens, most of the Forum members were not ready to participate in remote meetings due to challenges like poor network and incompatible devices. The project coordinator was not able to visit schools for monitoring, support and evaluation either. The lockdown came at a time where most of the schools were about to harvest maize and butternut. Some schools had begun planting new crops. Amidst the constraining factors due to the lockdown, the following survival strategies were implemented to maintain the good care of the gardens:

- **School Governing Bodies and surrounding school communities tend to gardens:**

In some of the schools, the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) took it upon themselves to make sure that the gardens were well maintained during the lockdown. In other schools, the SGBs mandated members of the communities who are familiar with crop production to look after the gardens during the lockdown. As a reward, members were encouraged to harvest the produce and share with others.



The garden at Ratshitanda Primary taken during level 5 of the lockdown. Community members maintained the garden.

- **Security officers watering the gardens:**

Very few schools employed this strategy since the majority of Initiative's schools are without security officers. They were requested to water the gardens when the schools were closed. Security officers were allowed to benefit from the produce of the gardens.

- **Educators and/or principals in close proximity of schools to work in gardens:**

Principals and educators who stay close to the schools were visiting the gardens to conduct the gardening work by themselves and making sure the crops don't go to waste or rot when not tended to.



Dzingahe Primary School where the SGB ensured there was a caretaker for the garden during lockdown.

- **Strategic working committee meetings:**

Forum online meetings were not possible during levels 4 and 5 of the lockdown, however the project coordinator managed to link the working committee members via WhatsApp calls. Two gadgets were placed side by side in order to accommodate the maximum number of the Jala Peo working committee members. A number of meetings were conducted in a similar manner to take decisions and update the working committee on the latest developments with respect to the Initiative.

- **Regular phone calls and messages among key stakeholders:**

Communication between the school principals and the project coordinator remained active during the period of levels 4 and 5 of lockdown. Advice was given about the best possible way to salvage the gardens during the pandemic. It is unfortunate that some schools could not adopt any survival strategies to keep their gardens maintained. One school lost its entire produce of maize due to the lack of access to the garden during lockdown.



**Give a man a fish, he eats for a day.
Teach a man to garden, and the whole
neighbourhood gets tomatoes.**



Search for our Jala Peo Initiative Facebook page: [Jala Peo School Food Garden Initiative](#)

Curriculum integration resources

HAROLD STRAUSS

LIFE CYCLE OF A VEGETABLE PLANT

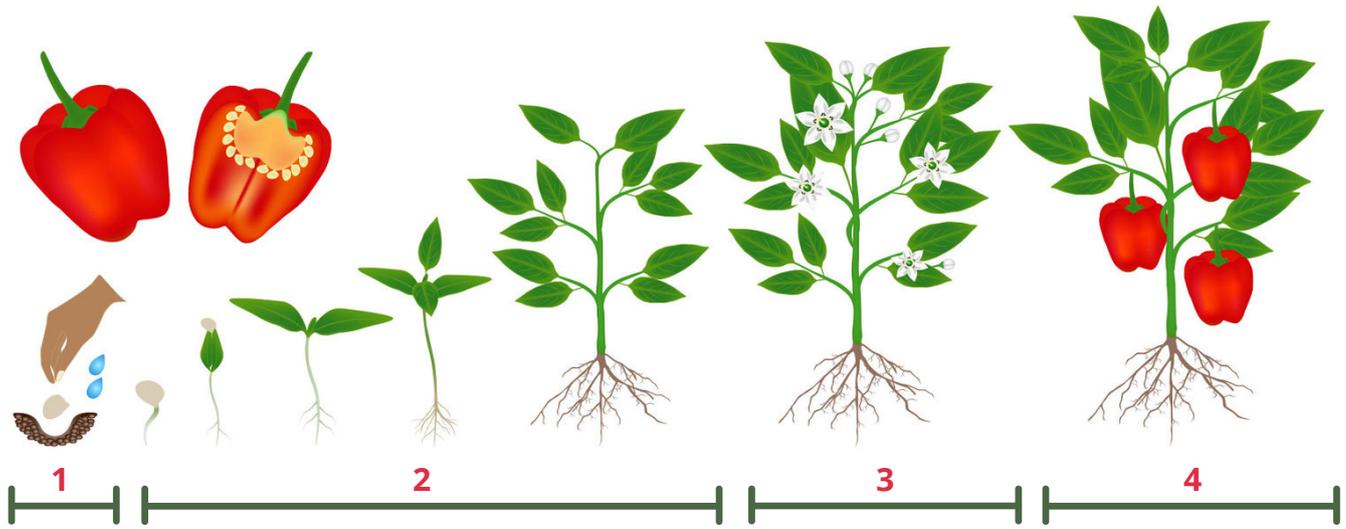


Image source: <https://www.kyreadysetgrow.org/curriculum/life-cycle-of-a-plant>

Seeds (Step 1)

The life cycle of a vegetable starts with a seed. Be it white, purple, smooth, or dimpled or water thin, each seed holds key structural components necessary to start growth. The growth triggers are external. Water must trickle through a tiny hole on the seed's surface and the soil temperature must reach a certain temperature for the seed to emerge. The first shoot and root will emerge, as the germination phase progress.

Seedling (Step 2)

A vegetable seedling or tiny plant emerges from the germination phase. The root system continues to develop, sucking up moisture and nutrients from the soil as the shoot pushes through the soil and unfurls the first set of leaves. The leaves, stalk and stem use the sun's rays to promote photosynthesis, a chemical process that is important for continued growth. As the vegetable plant continues to grow in size with more leaves cropping out and the root system spreading to help anchor and feed the plant, it turns its attention to reproduction. Flowers sprout and rely on birds, bees and other insects to pollinate them as wind and water can also play a role.

Fruiting (Step 3)

Reproductive efforts are the main goal of vegetable gardening. Flowering and pollination pave the way for vegetables or plant fruit. As plants grow fruit, it expends more energy than it ever will during its life. Extra water and nutrients are needed if fruit is to reach its full culinary and physical potential.

Maturation (Step 4)

Vegetables are best known for feeding people. It is also important for the survival of the human race. Gardeners can however repeat the vegetable growth cycle by drying and planting seeds.

Coronavirus awareness



#NewNormal #Covid19

Wear your mask correctly

It must cover from the bridge of your nose to over your chin at all times

Wash your mask daily

health

#NewNormal #Covid19

1. Wear a mask
2. Wash hands
3. Keep at least one and a half metre distance from people
4. Open windows
5. Do everything possible outdoors
6. Avoid crowded spaces
7. Be quick when you are out for necessary work or errands
8. Stay at home as far as possible

health

#NewNormal #Covid19

Protecting each other

Wear a mask

Everyone is potentially a sick person who is spreading the virus

If we all wear masks, we limit the spread of the infection

A cloth mask traps the virus-containing respiratory particles during breathing, coughing or talking

We protect each other

health

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Jala Peo is an initiative of

