About us
The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation was established by Stephanie Alexander OAM in 2004, in response to the overwhelming interest in and success of the piloting of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program at Collingwood College, Melbourne, from 2001.

The Foundation has since secured funding to expand the Kitchen Garden Program to other interested schools. We have engaged with schools, governments, philanthropists and passionate individual donors to move the Kitchen Garden Program from a pilot program to an established food education model that is now implemented by schools all across the country.

The Foundation provides skills, support and inspiration to schools to help them implement and deliver the Kitchen Garden Program. The Foundation also plays a role in lobbying National and State Governments to fund the Kitchen Garden Program.

Operating with a small, dedicated team across Australia, we are a not-for-profit, charitable organisation that relies on the generosity, shared vision and commitment of schools, volunteers, philanthropic organisations, government, business and individuals.

Why did Stephanie start the Kitchen Garden Program?
Stephanie had been aware of the growing obesity problem in Australia and internationally, and felt it was largely caused by people simply not knowing how to prepare fresh, nutritious and delicious food. She believes the problem begins in childhood, and that the best way to address it is by means of early intervention. While many educational food programs are well-intentioned, they neglect to involve children in an engaging, pleasurable system.

Inspired by her childhood memories of a kitchen garden, parents passionate about food and a family culture that focused on the ritual of sharing a meal, Stephanie developed the philosophy of the Kitchen Garden Program to ensure children were enthusiastic about the food production process from start to finish, were encouraged to be proud of their achievements, and were given the skills and understanding that would inform them for life.

I believe that the way to change how kids feel about food is for them to have a hands-on experience and to learn about it from the very beginning of popping a seed in the ground to coming into a kitchen and sitting around the table and eating with their friends.

Stephanie Alexander

Her model does away with rules and focuses on the pleasurable aspects of preparing meals, suggesting that positive food habits can only be created when they are fun. Stephanie wanted to set up a real-life model with real-life participants, and Collingwood College became the pilot school.

What is the Kitchen Garden Program?
Kitchen Garden Schools commit to a dynamic and innovative model whereby kitchen and garden classes are run weekly, enabling skills-based learning that extends across the entire school curriculum.

Children across Years 3 to 7 spend a minimum of 45 minutes a week in an extensive vegetable garden that they have helped design, build and maintain on the school grounds according to organic gardening principles.

They also spend 1½ hours each week in a kitchen classroom preparing and sharing a wonderful variety of meals created from their produce. The school employs two part-time specialist staff, a Garden Specialist and a Kitchen Specialist, to run these sessions. The kitchen and garden classes work in partnership with each other, so that they form a harmonious cycle.

In both the kitchen and the garden the children work together in small groups with the assistance of community volunteers. The finished dishes are arranged with pride and care on tables set with flowers from the garden, and the shared meal is a time for students, helpers, teachers and specialists to enjoy each other’s company and conversation.
There are two unique factors about the Kitchen Garden Program. The first is the intrinsic link between the garden, the kitchen and the table. The emphasis is on learning about food and about eating it. No part of the Program can exist without the other. The second factor is that the Program is embedded in the curriculum – it becomes a part of the school's program for four years of a child's life.

There are currently 193 schools implementing the Kitchen Garden Program across Australia. A fourth national Australian Government round of funding opened in May 2011, the Foundation looks forward to welcoming many new schools into the Program in the future.

Benefits of the Program
A formal academic evaluation of the Kitchen Garden Program has been undertaken by Deakin University and the University of Melbourne. The findings are extremely positive and demonstrate that the Kitchen Garden Program is encouraging positive health behaviour change in participating children. The evaluation also highlights the transfer of benefits to the home and the broader community. The evaluation found:

- Strong evidence of increased child willingness to try new foods.
- Garden and kitchen classes were greatly enjoyed by children, and children at Program schools were significantly more likely to report that they liked cooking ‘a lot’.
- Significant increases in child knowledge, confidence and skills in cooking and gardening.
- The Program was considered particularly effective at engaging ‘non-academic learners’ and children with challenging behaviours.
- The Program helped to create links between schools and the community. This was noted as one of its most important outcomes.
- Although the transfer of benefits to the home environment was not one of the goals of the Program, it strongly emerged as a flow-on benefit.
- Increased integration with the rest of the curriculum helped to overcome competing priorities for class time.
- Program schools on average generated $1.93 of additional resources for every $1 of government funding invested in the Program.

“The benefits are phenomenal. It fits into the curriculum very nicely. All the interpersonal skills are covered – teamwork, cooperation, relating to each other – in ways that cannot be replicated in a classroom. I say to the teachers at assessment time – just visualise the children in the Kitchen Garden Program; that’s the pinnacle of what they’re learning.”

Principal, Nunawading PS

How do schools get involved?
Schools have been supported in implementing the Kitchen Garden Program through a number of different national and state government funding opportunities. These grants represent part-funding for the Kitchen Garden Program, with schools expected to contribute the balance from their own resources and community networks.

Thus far the Foundation has administered the selection process on behalf of state and national governments – we invite schools to submit applications and manage a rigorous selection process authorised by government departments. When successful, the new Kitchen Garden School receives funds towards building the necessary kitchen and garden infrastructure. The role of the Foundation is to provide ongoing support in implementing the Program in the school.

National Program
The Australian Government has provided $12.8 million of infrastructure funding over four years, to enable up to 190 eligible Australian schools to establish the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden National Program by 2012.

Infrastructure grants of up to $66,000 (GST inclusive) per school are being allocated in grant rounds over a four-year period from 2008 to 2012.
The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation

Queensland Program
In June 2011 the Queensland Government announced it will be providing almost $2 million to help 25 schools implement the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Queensland Program. Infrastructure grants of up to $66,000 will be available to successful schools, with funds expected to be allocated at the end of 2011.

Victorian Program
Under the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Victorian Program the Victorian State Government has provided $3.7 million for 59 primary schools to implement the Kitchen Garden Program over the 2005 to 2011 period.

The funding provides each successful school with a grant of $62,500 over two years, with $12,500 apportioned towards building a kitchen and garden, and $25,000 per year towards staffing the Program.

By 2012, over 250 schools around Australia will be Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Schools, with 30,000 children actively engaged in the Program each year.

Our Subscription Program
Many schools and organisations are not eligible for government funding, but wish to draw on the Kitchen Garden Program model. The Kitchen Garden Subscription Program enables schools, organisations and individuals to create their own version of the successful Kitchen Garden Program and draw on the knowledge and expertise gained by the Kitchen Garden Foundation over many years of intensive practice.

Primary schools, pre-schools, high schools, community centres and co-ops are now enjoying the many benefits of the Subscription Program, joining a growing network of food enthusiasts and educators from across Australia and beyond.

Participating schools
The diversity of the locations of Kitchen Garden Schools – from Coober Pedy in the outback, to Alawa in the tropics, to beachside Bondi – means that each community has its own challenges, successes and bumper crops. But all are united in their passion to bring the benefits of pleasurable food education to their students.

Please refer to the Foundation website for a list of all Kitchen Garden Schools.

kitchengardenfoundation.org.au