

CAN GARDENING HELP CHILDREN GROW? PROFESSOR SALLIE MARSTON AND MOSES THOMPSON

TO MAKE THE MOST OUT OF THIS SCRIPT, YOU COULD:

- Stick it in your book as a record of watching Sallie and Moses' animation
- Pause the animation and make notes as you go
- Add your own illustrations to the sheet
- Create your own animation to accompany it
- Add notes from classroom discussions
- Make notes of areas you will investigate further
- Make notes of key words and definitions
- Add questions you would like answered – you can message Sallie and Moses through the comments box at the bottom of their article:

www.futurumcareers.com/can-gardening-help-children-grow

SCRIPT:

The Sonoran Desert in Arizona, USA, may seem an unlikely place for a garden to flourish. However, it is the most biodiverse desert in North America and Indigenous people have been growing food here for 4000 years.

Despite the harsh climate, school yards in Tucson, a city in this desert landscape, are bursting with colour, thanks to the work of Professor Sallie Marston, Moses Thompson and the University of Arizona's School Garden Workshop. In his work as a school counsellor, Moses noticed that children who struggled in the classroom thrived in a garden environment, as being in the garden reduced their stress and anxiety.

School gardens not only support emotional well-being by providing opportunities to enjoy nature, but they can also be used as learning resources. Students can monitor weather conditions, learn about traditional uses of plants and create artwork inspired by their natural surroundings.

School gardens also promote healthy eating, because as well as learning how to grow food, students learn how to cook healthy meals, and produce grown in gardens is served in school cafeterias. The school gardens in Tucson incorporate the wider community by drawing in family members and neighbours to share their gardening skills and knowledge with students.

Having witnessed the benefits school gardens bring to students, teachers and communities, Sallie and Moses wanted to investigate these impacts from a scientific viewpoint. They focused on the psychological concept of resilience, and whether students have greater resilience if they attend a school with a garden.

Sallie and Moses used the school closures caused by the COVID pandemic as the case study for their research. Resilience is the ability to endure stress and bounce back to a pre-crisis state. So, when schools reopened, they observed children in schools with and without gardens, to compare how children readapted to life back at school.

However, they discovered the concept of resilience was a poor fit for their investigation. In Tucson, around one in four children live below the federal poverty line. This means there was no true 'pre-crisis' state for children to return to after the pandemic. Instead, Sallie and Moses are comparing the well-being and self-determination of children with access to school gardens and those without.

Over their years of working with the School Garden Workshop, Sallie and Moses have observed first-hand how school gardens are helping not only flowers, but also children, bloom in the desert. What could you achieve as a school gardener and counsellor?