Welcome to Enviro-News for 2012. This edition brings you up to date with many of the activities that have been happening with our school's environmental program.

Environmental Education at Pennant Hills Public School has got off to another great start in 2012.

Here is a brief list of a few of our achievements so far this year......

- We renewed our involvement with the Hornsby Council Ready Set Grow Program.
- Our Year 2 classes have allocated gardening days to their very busy timetable to continue the great work in our revamped Bicentennial Garden.
- Recycling in K-2 continues to be well looked after by Year 2 and in 3-6 by Year 6
- One session of School Development Day Term 2 saw the whole staff engaged with Hornsby Council talking to us about worm farms and compost.

Ready Set Grow Program

This year we were invited to participate for a second year in the Hornsby Council Ready Set Grow Program. The program is a joint initiative between Hornsby Council and Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Service, Health Promotions program. The program is aimed at encouraging and supporting the creation of sustainable school fruit and vegetable gardens where concepts such as composting, consumption and recycling can be introduced.

Our vegetable garden is located behind the K-2 office and this year has doubled in size thanks to the keen interest and enthusiasm shown by James Davidson, a Kindergarten dad. James came up with a great plan to more efficiently use the space we had. He also donated time on the weekends to move the current beds around and add additional beds to the area. He suggested a fabulous summer and winter planting plan for the veggie patch which we have already made use of.

Thanks very much for your help Davidson family.
At the start of Term 2, Kindergarten began their unit on Change which focuses on how things grow and change over time. One excellent way to look at how things change is to look at how seeds and seedlings grow. Early in Term 2, Kindergarten refreshed one of the no dig vegetable gardens. They started three new vegetable beds using the no dig garden method. Each child in Kindergarten was able to participate in building up the layers in the no dig garden. We have also had another exciting addition to our Kinder vegetable patch and that is a potato bed. Remember our vegetable garden is located behind the K-2 office, so keep your eye out for our vegies.

**Potatoes...Did you know?**

Potatoes are a small, green-leaved, plants which grow up to 50cm tall. They are so easy to grow in the no dig, organic way. As they grow, the roots swell at their ends producing tubers (potatoes). Each plant consists of a number of small leaves attached to the main shoot by small stems.

They do blossom, but the potatoes don't come from fertilised flowers. They form as a food store (tuber) at the end of the roots. Depending on the variety, they take 90-130 days to reach maturity. If harvested before they reach maturity, they're generally called a new potato, at which time the skin will be paper thin and easy to rub off.

They’re also a great source of vitamins, minerals and iron. Most of the goodness lies just beneath the surface of the skin though, so try to keep at least some of the skin intact when preparing for cooking. They are a close relative of tomatoes, capsicums and eggplants. The tubers are like washed river stones, rather smooth and rounded, varying in size and shape from round or oval to long and thin.

**Compost**

During 2011, school community members built the first of three compost bins for the K-2 site. The aim was to start to compost the enormous amount of leaf litter and grass clippings that are generated in maintaining the grounds at our school. This has been quite successful and we have used the compost that was created from the lawn clippings on the Kinder veggie patch. In 2011 we also had a plan to add two small black bins so that food scraps could also be composted. However, this didn't happen. At our Term 2 School Development Day, we looked into this again and have decided that we will give the black bins a trial for six months. They will be placed near our veggie patch and filled up with lunch scraps.

By turning garden vegetation and food scraps into compost you can:

- **improve** soil quality and garden vitality
- **conserve** water
- **recycle** valuable nutrients and reduce the use of artificial fertilisers
- **prevent** greenhouse gas emissions and landfill impacts from wasted food and garden vegetation.

Stay tuned as to how we are going......
The 3-6 Green Thumbs group has been working very hard to keep the vegetable patch in tip top shape. Sometimes there are upward of twenty students working in the garden. We are in the process of relocating our mint to a new bed around the giant Oak tree, so that it can’t escape all over the playground. We have also recently planted four citrus trees - orange, lime, lemon and mandarin, and they are thriving. Surrounding the citrus trees we have planted marigolds, but they have been a bit slow to grow. Many of the seedlings raised by the Kindergarten children have been planted in our garden and they are doing well despite the recent heavy rain. We are quite excited to see if we can grow some big strong carrots!

Our weekly Wednesday garden stall continues to do well. Currently we are selling a variety of herbs including mint, basil (although the season is nearly over), thyme, rosemary, onion chives and parsley. We also have celery and silver-beet for sale. Our snow peas are beginning to produce and with a little more sunshine should provide a bountiful crop over the coming weeks.

Worm Farming

We now have an additional worm farm and Year 2 children are continuing to do a fantastic job at looking after the worm farms. They are rotating the job between the classes on a term by term basis. They continue to monitor how much food the worms have. When they see that the worms are ready for more food, they put out the buckets for the K-2 students to put their food scraps in. They then transfer the scraps into the worm farm. They are fast becoming avid worm farmers!

Another important part of being a worm farmer is to make sure that after four or five months, the worm casts or vermicast on the bottom level are removed and used on the garden. We have learnt how to get the worms out before putting the vermicast onto the garden. Just put them in the sunlight and scrape the top layer of the worm castings off. The worms will then tunnel down to get away from the sunlight. Then the children sprinkle the vermicast around the plants and they love it.

Worms... Did you know?

Worms do eat
- Fruit except citrus
- Vegetables except onions
- Coffee grounds and filter
- Tea bags
- Crushed egg shells
- Leaves
- Shredded paper

Worms do not eat
- Citrus fruit
- Oily foods
- Meat, poultry, fish
- Dairy foods
- Vinegar or salad dressings
- Plants from the onion family
**Schools Tree Day— Friday 27th July**

A date for your diary…. Schools Tree Day

What is Schools Tree Day?

Each year, around 2500 schools across Australia take part in Schools Tree Day. Students nation-wide have learnt how to plant and care for the seedlings they grow. Schools Tree Day 2012 is on Friday 27th July 2012, although events can be held at any time during the year.

This year, Planet Ark is inviting you to venture into the great outdoors and connect with nature. Schools Tree Day can mark the beginning of long-term environmental program or simply contribute to creating beautiful school grounds.

At Pennant Hills we have a tradition at our K-2 Sports Day to collect a gold coin from each of the children. We then use the money collected on that day to purchase one tree per year group. These trees are then planted on Schools Tree Day by each year group.

Thank you to all those families who send along a gold coin for collection at the Sports Day.

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**Mobile Phone Muster**

Last year we participated in the Mobile Phone Muster and as Mrs Willis recently wrote in the school newsletter......

In 2011, our school collected 2.5kgs of mobile phones, batteries and accessories which contributed to the ‘old phones, more chickens’ campaign where MobileMuster purchased 2000 chickens through the Oxfam Unwrapped program to be given to families living in poverty in Laos.

Beginning in Term 3 and until the end of Term 4 2012, we will again be participating in the campaign. We will have collection boxes in both school offices. The Mobile Muster program collects and recycles mobile phone handsets, batteries and accessories from a network of over 1900 mobile phone retailers, local council, government agencies and business drop off points across Australia. The recycling service is free to consumers and the organisations that collect phones.

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**Battery Recycling**

This year, as part of our recycling program at the school, we are going to continue to offer a battery recycling service which is organised through Hornsby Council. It is very straight forward to do.... there will be a box located on both sites and you simply bring in used small batteries such as AA or AAA and place them in the box. When the box is full, we post it off to the recycling company and the council arranges for another box to be sent to the school.