

A photograph showing two children from the waist down, holding a large green plastic bucket filled with dark brown soil. The child on the left is wearing a blue jacket, pink trousers, and blue rubber boots. The child on the right is wearing a blue jacket, white trousers, and blue rubber boots. They are standing on a paved surface with some grass visible on the right. The text 'UWE & Hartcliffe Nursery School Growing Project' is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

UWE & Hartcliffe Nursery School Growing Project

With The Children's Kitchen

2023

Project Outline

This project focuses on edible growing and sustainability education for early years children at Hartcliffe Nursery School.. Through working in collaboration with UWE students we will regenerate the 'Sensory Garden' of the Nursery School to provide an enclosed space for the children to plant, grow, pick and explore fresh produce. We will also be linking with the nearby Hartcliffe City Farm, which has recently been taken over by a partnership group of Windmill City Farm and Heart of BS13. We would like to facilitate regular visits to the farm for children and families and foster a lasting relationship between the two locations.

The project consists of five full day visits to the Nursery where the students will be:

- Taking part in training in the ethos, aims and practice of The Children's Kitchen within the broader context of food insecurity in Bristol.
- Hands on Food Sessions with children
- Co-designing the growing space with young children
- Planting seeds and plants, installing watering systems and composting.
- Visiting Hartcliffe City Farm and building links with the Nursery

The Garden Before

The Sensory Garden was a little used space where in the past there had been some growing of vegetables which had been left during Covid and was now unloved and overgrown.

The raised beds were placed on the paths and got no direct sunlight and the bushes and shrubs around the space were overgrown. Most of the raised beds were old and unstable.

The shed had been filled with storage and had been vandalised in the past so was impractical to use.



The Garden After

During the holidays Incredible Edible Bristol and local volunteers came and helped us to remove tyres, overgrown shrubs, weeds and broken raised beds. We redesigned the space so that the paths became accessible and the raised beds had direct sunlight. We took delivery of two tonnes of peat free compost from Bristol Waste to regenerate the growing beds.

We left the space a blank canvas for the children to reimagine.



A close-up photograph of a black plastic seedling tray filled with small onion plants. The plants have green shoots and brown, bulbous roots. The background is blurred, showing more trays of plants.

How do we co-design a garden?

We found ways to imagine the garden space with the 3 year olds:

Mapping

Selecting images of fruit and veg

Discussing animal habitats and what a garden needs to survive

The UWE students spent an afternoon talking with the children, walking around the garden, scribing and mapping their ideas.

Key ideas from the children:

Colour! Fruit, lots of fruit (with some selected vegetables!) Attracting butterflies, birds and creatures, flowers. A space to relax. Somewhere to sit and have a snack. The shed as a place to sit/play.

Hartcliffe City Farm

One of the aims of the project is to build links with Hartcliffe City Farm which has been reopened by Windmill Hill City Farm and Heart of BS13. This has the potential to be a key place for Nursery families to visit but relationships need to be built. The Children's Kitchen have a long relationship, and a workshop base, at Windmill Hill Farm so building on this is key. We visited the farm with the UWE students and saw the new landscaping and building work that is happening. There are already animals onsite and there will be an early growing education area. In May we will end the whole project with drop in picnic sessions for the nursery families.





A place to sit!

The garden bench was adult height and very narrow so difficult for the children to sit on. We asked Luke from Incredible Edible Bristol to create a child height bench for the garden. Like is a talented woodworker and he cut down a tree, planed the wood and crafted a beautiful bench. We would love to make another one with children being able to see the process. If this isn't possible we will assemble a step by step photo gallery of how the bench was made



Developing the garden



Growing seeds is a key part of the children developing the garden so we started this before Easter in the classrooms. The children were really excited by this and also helped to plant strawberries, herbs and fruit trees in the garden.

In the next term, when the soil warms up, we will be planting heritage (multicoloured) vegetable seeds and also lots of beans around the site so that by summer there are beans galore to harvest. This will be linked to the curriculum and books including Jack and the Beanstalk.

We covered the patchy grass with wood chip and repainted the area chefs, which can now be used to support plants. The shed had a clear out and we sourced new child sized tools. We also made safe the water butts which can now be used by the children.