

Reviewer Biography

Lorne Butt is a PhD candidate in sustainable practice at Macquarie University's Graduate School of Management. She has worked for over 12 years across the areas of corporate governance, strategic planning, project management, quality management and audit, risk management, sustainability, international education, and occupational health and safety. Lorne is a Director, and Company Secretary, of the Institute for Sustainable Leadership Ltd. Lorne also holds the role of Ecological Sustainability Coordinator with TAFE Western in NSW, and is a member of the Advisory Board of the Institute for Land, Water and Society at Charles Sturt University.

Learning Gardens and Sustainability Education: Bringing Life to Schools and Schools to Life

Dilafruz R. Williams and Jonathan D. Brown Routledge, New York, 2012, 227 pp, ISBN 978-0415899826
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Reviewed by Monica Green, Monash University (Gippsland), Victoria, Australia

In addition to the proliferation of school garden literature over the past decade, *Learning Gardens and Sustainability Education* brings a new theoretical framework to food garden discourses. Unlike other books, *Learning Gardens* takes up a critical, ecological and pedagogical lens to explain learning that occurs through gardening and growing food. Throughout the book, living soil is situated as a metaphor and central theme that drives and enables curriculum to advance children's understanding of broader ecological and social systems. Through discourses of human/more than human, sustainability, and ecology/culture the book uses new metaphoric language to disrupt traditional approaches to teaching and learning, which are replaced with whole-system methods.

The book is divided into three sections that examine the significance of gardens as learning sites, the pedagogical implications of learning gardens, and the practical application of garden-based frameworks via specific case studies that portray the perspectives of teachers, principals and the broader community.

Part I: *Learning Gardens, Living Soil, and Sustainability Education* provides a rigorous literature review on sustainability education and its varying definitions, the history and current trends of school gardens, and the role of curriculum for learning gardens. Mechanistic and dominant approaches underpinning current educational systems (for example, competitive, decontextualised and individualistic) are troubled and emphasised as incongruent with 'living systems and sustainability'. In asking: where is the learning in learning gardens, the authors examine the design and implementation of curricula and pedagogy that successfully integrates school gardens into the broader curriculum. The integrated approaches offered within the book provide educators with explicit examples of how a range of cross-curricula subject areas can be woven into garden-based learning.

In Part II, *Learning Gardens Principles Linking Pedagogy and Pedology* emphasises seven principles that link pedagogy with the study of soil (pedology), which include: cultivating a sense of place, fostering curiosity and wonder, discovering rhythm and scale, valuing biocultural diversity, embracing practical experience, nurturing interconnect- edness, and awakening the senses. The detailed pedagogical and theoretical contribu- tions of the seven principles provide the reader with a deepened understanding of how the concepts can be embedded within sustainability curriculum. These principles are the catalyst for rethinking the role of gardens and gardening in the broader school curriculum.

The final section, *Practice Comes Alive from the Ground Up*, provides firsthand ac- counts from practitioners and principals who are implementing living gardens and gar- den pedagogies that are framed by interdisciplinary, ecological and conceptual frame- works. Their stories of bringing children closer to understanding the living systems that sustain people and places are inspiring, and speak to the ways local communities and schools are working together to advance sustainability. The emphasis here is on collaborative and collective approaches that provide longevity to programs, and which significantly contribute to supporting the sustenance of educators.

Learning Gardens and Sustainability Education is a thoroughly researched book. The academic and practical emphasis of this book makes it a valuable text for the in- creasing numbers of educators (in schools, universities and communities) who are inter- ested in using learning gardens as a pathway for the development and implementation of sustainability. In short, the book successfully theorises living gardens as rich and authentic portals for teaching and learning sustainability.

Reviewer Biography

Dr Monica Green is a lecturer at Monash University in the Faculty of Education (Gippsland campus). Her current research focuses on pedagogies and curriculum that support education for sustainability, including climate change and the preserva- tion of local places and communities. As a researcher she is interested in the pedagog- ical potential of everyday places that nurture children's emotional, social, physical and ecological development through embodied learning. Her research has examined the significance of 'place' and place-oriented curriculum frameworks that shape and inform sustainability education.