

A question of balance: Australian Environments

Strand

Culture and Identity

Place and Space

Time, Continuity and Change

Core learning outcomes

<i>Time, Continuity and Change</i>	TCC 5.5	Students identify values inherent in historical sources to reveal who benefits or is disadvantaged by particular heritages.
<i>Place and Space</i>	PS 5.1	Students synthesise information from the perspectives of different groups to identify patterns that constitute a region.
	PS 5.2	Students design strategies for evaluating environmental impacts of a proposed project, highlighting relationships within and between natural systems.
	PS 5.3	Students participate in geographical inquiries to evaluate impacts on ecosystems in different global locations.
	PS 5.4	Students use maps, diagrams and statistics to justify placing value on environments in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.
<i>Culture and Identity</i>	CI 5.4	Students describe how governments have caused changes to particular groups.

Purpose and overview

Activities begin with the development of an organic food-growing project to provide a focus to farming methods and the environment. The activities develop appreciations of natural systems and predispositions to care for fragile environments. In this module students are involved in planting, cultivating, caring for and harvesting herbs and vegetables. They also design strategies to evaluate the environmental impacts of their gardening project. This project provides a common and practical context in which students can develop understandings about environments and impacts of farming on ecosystems.



Phases	Activities	Core learning outcomes	Assessment opportunities
1. Focusing on the environment	1. Project preparation	PS 5.2	Project journals Discussion
2. Investigating	2. Investigating impacts of farming methods in different global locations	PS 5.1 PS 5.3 PS 5.4	Group reports Observations
3. Evaluating data	3. Governments and land use	CI 5.4 TCC 5.5	Project journals
4. Communicating findings	4. How farming methods impact on ecosystems	Negotiable	Project journals Debate

Assessment

The assessment opportunities outlined are examples of how to assess students' demonstrations of the identified learning outcomes. As often as possible, negotiate assessment with students and support a variety of ways of demonstrating the learning outcomes. Reflect with students on evidence gathered when making judgments about their demonstrations of learning outcomes. Some students may require more time and/or other contexts in which to demonstrate these learning outcomes. Other modules may provide such time and/or contexts and the 'Levels 1 to 6 module learning outcomes maps' in the *Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment Sourcebook Guidelines* can be used to identify these modules.

Assessing learning outcomes at different levels

Activities are designed primarily for students working towards demonstrations of Level 5 learning outcomes. Some assessment opportunities may be used to decide whether students are demonstrating the learning outcomes at levels before or after Level 5. To guide judgments about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes consider whether students are:

- working towards demonstration of the Level 5 learning outcomes
- demonstrating the Level 5 learning outcomes
- demonstrating the Level 5 learning outcomes and working towards Level 6 learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes in the syllabus at Level 4 and Level 6 could provide a guide for teacher judgments. Studies of Society and Environment learning outcomes are organised so that there is a progression of concepts and processes within a strand. For example, the progression from PS 4.2 and PS 5.2 to PS 6.2 involves increasing sophistication and complexity particularly related to the concept of *processes and environment* and the process of *creating*, though neither of these is exclusive of other concepts and processes. The elaborations provide specific content examples of how the concepts and processes may be levelled from Level 1 to 6. See the sourcebook guidelines on the Queensland School Curriculum Council website for more information.

Using this module

Using this module requires prior planning to consider its timing, what to grow, an organic approach, possible expertise available in the school and community and materials needed.

The timing and duration of this module should take into consideration natural factors (such as climate and season) and the growth properties of the vegetables and herbs selected. Plants from punnets need less time than their seed-grown counterparts. As Queensland is climatically diverse, local factors such as temperature, wind and insolation levels may influence planting times, locations of plots and tubs and maintenance practices. Students will benefit from finding out basic information on features of their climate zone. As soil varies locally, a talk by a local nursery staff member may be useful. The minimum time necessary for a class to plan, prepare beds and to raise 'crops' is ten to twelve weeks. See Resource 1 for what to grow.

An organic approach means farming as much as possible without the addition of artificial chemicals. This will help students to understand connections between nutrients, nutrient cycles and food grown. Student safety is enhanced without the use of chemical sprays. If an insect pest problem occurs students should be encouraged to make organic sprays from natural ingredients (for example, chilli, capsicum and garlic). Some pests can be removed manually without recourse to sprays.

Ground staff may be able to assist with materials needed. For example:

- secure space for working, planting or storing tubs
- watering systems (hand held or manual/automated sprinkler)
- tubs for food growing
- compost
- hand tools (trowel, spades, mattocks, rakes; and garden forks)
- mini-garden stakes (for tubs small sticks would suffice) and ties
- supplementary potting mix
- supplementary organic fertiliser
- seed and punnet plants
- mulch.

Background information

Terminology

In this module students have opportunities to become familiar with and use the following terminology:

agriculture	farming	genetically	natural
biodegradable	container farming	engineered	pesticide
biodiversity	conventional farming	green waste	nutrient
biological chemical	dehydrated food	herbs	organic
fertiliser	ecologically	indigenous foods	farming
chemical pesticide	sustainable	intensive farming	permaculture
chemical residue	energy value	irrigation	pest
companion planting	fertiliser	leaching	recyclable
compost		local foods	self sufficiency
conservation		mini-farm	soil
		mulch	sustainable
			production

School authority policies

Be aware of and observe school authority policies that may be relevant to this module particularly in relation to workplace health and safety and handling, storage and use of chemicals and garden tools.

Equity considerations

Activities take place in a supportive environment. They provide opportunities for students to increase their understanding and appreciation of equity through valuing diversity and challenging inequities. Activities encourage students to:

- recognise how different groups have been advantaged or disadvantaged by heritages related to the use of the natural environment
- acknowledge how future generations can be affected by the type of foods we grow and how we grow them. In this way concepts of intergenerational equity are developed.

Some students with disabilities may need assistance with some activities. Advice should be sought from their support teachers. It is important that these equity considerations inform decision making about teaching strategies, classroom organisation and assessment.

Links

Studies of Society and Environment

This module is one of a suite of modules for Levels 1 to 6. See the Queensland School Curriculum Council website at www.qscc.qld.edu.au for more information.

This module develops concepts associated with human-environment relationships, processes and environments, stewardship, spatial patterns, cultural change and heritage. It also develops processes associated with investigating, creating, participating, communicating and reflecting. It is linked to learning outcomes: TCC 4.5, PS 4.1, PS 4.2, PS 4.3, PS 4.4, CI 5.4, TCC 6.5, PS 6.1, PS 6.2, PS 6.3, PS 6.4, CI 6.4

Other key learning areas

Activities may offer opportunities for planning across key learning areas. However, it is important that the integrity of the key concepts, organising ideas and processes within key learning areas is maintained.

Evaluation of a unit of work

After completion of units of work developed from this module, collect information and make judgments about:

- teaching strategies and activities used to progress student learning towards demonstrations of core learning outcomes
- opportunities provided to gather evidence about students' demonstrations of core learning outcomes
- future learning opportunities for students who have not yet demonstrated the core learning outcomes and to challenge and extend those students who have already demonstrated the core learning outcomes
- the extent to which activities matched needs of particular groups of students and reflected equity considerations
- the appropriateness of time allocations for particular activities
- the appropriateness of resources used.

Information from this evaluation process can be used to plan subsequent units of work so that they build on, and support, student learning. The evaluated units of work may also be adapted prior to their reuse. For further information, refer to the 'Curriculum evaluation' section in the sourcebook guidelines.

Activities

Phase 1 Focusing on the environment

Core learning outcomes emphasis: PS 5.2

Students begin a gardening project to provide a practical focus for designing strategies for evaluating the environmental impacts of such a project.

Focus questions:

- What is this project about?
- What materials are needed?
- Why is compost needed and how is it best created?
- How should soil for growing vegetables and herbs be prepared?
- What is organic gardening?
- What should we plant in this project?
- How might we evaluate the environmental impact of this gardening project?

Activity 1 Project preparation

Gardening project Explain the gardening project. Emphasise that students will use their experiences to grow plants and investigate the possible impacts on the environment. Explain the core learning outcome PS 5.2 and that the 'project' is vegetable and herb growing. Explain that students will work in teams of two or three and record their observations and investigations in a project journal. The journal will provide evidence of demonstrations of the learning outcomes particular to this module. If possible take photographs of the processes throughout the project.

Making compost Introduce the organic farming concept of compost making. Ask students to investigate how to make compost. Compare and discuss findings. Discuss suitable composting materials, ideal locations for a compost heap, maintenance, time needed, the importance of soil for the growth of plants, the role of compost in building soil fertility and the role of mulch in improving conditions for plant growth.

As students begin to make compost. Discuss:

- How much is to be made? (several plastic shopping bags full)
- How can pests be kept away? (turn the heap over at least once a week)
- How can the smell be controlled? (turn the heap over at least once a week)
- How much water does a compost need? (keep it just slightly dampen).

Use the magnification of a binocular microscope (sometimes called stereoscope) to examine a maturing compost sample. Compost is a living, dynamic ecosystem, a system of life forms that consume decaying materials, and each other. It is a food web based upon the nutrients and energy remaining in decomposing kitchen scraps and garden wastes. Students should be able to see tiny creatures consuming, growing, reproducing and dying in the compost.

Soil preparation Soil preparation can occur while the compost is being prepared. Soil will need to be turned, especially if it was previously under growing grass. Do not use poisons or artificial chemical fertilizers. Once soil is prepared cover with mulch to avoid erosion by rain. Explain that soil needs to be nurtured and allowed to breathe, so that the worms can live.

Planting Once the soil is prepared plant selected crops.

Evaluating environmental impact Discuss strategies that students may use to evaluate the environmental impacts of their project. Students may choose to investigate dependence and interdependence; the addition or removal of an element to a system; or the introduction of chemicals. Explain that research will be conducted throughout the project and findings and discussions recorded in project journals.

Ask students in their journals to:

- suggest what impacts this project may have on local natural and built environments

- identify aspects that they may need to learn more about, for example bacteria, air, soil (pH level, moisture content, worm activity)
- identify features of the local environment that may impact upon the garden, for example soil types and the vegetation they best support, insects, climate and local weather, local water, current recycling strategies, relationship of shade and wind from built environments to plant growth and the amount of air pollution
- speculate as to how one natural system may influence another and suggest possible ways that these speculations could be tested, for example collaborate with science teachers conduct controlled experiments to assess how increases in the moisture content of soils affects worm activity, how the level of worm activity an/or soil bacteria affects plant growth and how companion planting can control insect infestations.

Students continue to tend their gardens, record their observations, sustain their investigations into the environmental impacts of the project and eventually harvest their crops.

Phase 2 Investigating

Core learning outcomes emphasis: PS 5.1, PS 5.3, PS 5.4

In this phase students conduct a geographic inquiry to evaluate possible impacts of different farming methods on ecosystems in various global locations.

Focus questions:

- What farming methods will we use?
- How do the farming methods we use compare with those used on local commercial farms and on farms elsewhere in the world?
- How do different farming methods impact on ecosystems?
- What are agricultural regions and how did they come about?

Activity 2 Impacts of farming methods in different global locations

Explain the processes involved in geographical inquiries (refer to 'Geography in Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment key learning area' available on the Queensland School Curriculum Council website).

Discuss the issue to be investigated — How farming methods impact on ecosystems. Remind students that they have begun investigating how their own farming methods impact on the environment and that their observations and findings should be considered during their inquiry.

Review the meaning of ecosystem, referring to the interdependence between systems.

Frame key questions to assist students to begin their inquiries:

- What are the issues and regions being studied?
- How and why are these regions defined?
- Why have these issues arisen?
- What are their impacts or consequences?
- What is being done and could be done to improve the environment?

Remind students to record their findings in their journals.

Assist students to locate resources and work through the processes of inquiry to answer the key questions.

Provide maps of land-use in Australia (see Chapter 10 of McCauley, D. Brown, P. and Mills, S. (2000) *SOSE 1 for Queensland*). Assist students to interpret the maps and decide on the major agricultural land use in their local area. Discuss why these agricultural land-uses may occur.

Use climatic maps to discuss the temperature and rainfall requirements of crops grown in nearby areas. Consider irrigation and where the water may be obtained. Use topographical maps of the local area to identify creeks, rivers and dams or other water sources.

Assist students in small groups to compare the perspectives provided by the different maps and to identify patterns that relate to a region.

Provide resources to assist students to explore impacts of agricultural practices on ecosystems in different parts of Australia and in the world. For example select extracts from:

- texts describing Australian case studies on the ecological impacts of agriculture, such as the Darling Downs, in Chapter 10, McCauley, D. Brown, P. and Mills, M. (2000)
- texts describing dams built for irrigation purposes, such as on the Yangtze in China, in Chapter 4, Alexander, D and Rouen, M. (2000).

Different groups would explore different areas but all students use the key questions to identify the location of agricultural practices, the reasons why they are used in those locations and the impacts or consequences of those practices. Share and discuss findings.

Discuss how the gardening project may provide opportunities to investigate solutions to environmental problems created by food production elsewhere. Discuss ideas for improving the ecological impact of the project and invite students to implement ideas and report on these, for example the use of rainwater instead of tap water for irrigation. Assist students to use maps, diagrams and statistics to further investigate farming regions in Australia and to begin to justify placing value on environments. Students could investigate:

- the percentage of land in Queensland devoted to primary industries
- the number of people worldwide who use Australian food and fibres
- current employment statistics in the agricultural sector
- changes in the population in regional Queensland compared with changes in Brisbane
- trends in use of pesticides and fertilizers on commercial farms
- statistics related to sustainable management of natural resources in modern agriculture.

Assist students to highlight the value of different environments related to food production. For example, use diagrams that show the impact of weathering on un-vegetated soil, a sketch map of major vegetation types in Australia, the effect of physical build on climate and vegetation, the structure of artesian basins, the location of vegetation types in relation to tectonic plates, coastal management practices such as riprap stone protection, the layers of a tropical rainforest, codes of practice for timber production.

Phase 3 Evaluating data

Core learning outcomes emphasis: CI 5.4, TCC 5.5

Students investigate how governments have influenced land use in Australia and how different groups have been advantaged and disadvantaged by this government involvement.

Focus questions:

- How have governments caused changes to groups who have used the land for food?
- What traditions or heritages do we have in Australia concerning land use?
- Who has been advantaged and who disadvantaged by these heritages?

Activity 3 Governments and land use

Discuss the core learning outcomes CI 5.4 and TCC 5.5 and focus on government involvement in land use.

Review students' investigations and discuss the importance of ecological interdependence and biodiversity. Discuss whether governments should legislate for water quality, biodiversity and chemically free environments. Assist students to identify historical sources to investigate government involvement in land use and who may have been advantaged or disadvantaged by government decisions. Ask students to analyse sources (Whose voices are represented/not represented?), interpret sources (What groups were immediately affected and advantaged or disadvantaged?) and evaluate sources (Why is this source reliable/unreliable?).

Assist students to investigate sources and record their findings in their journals. Discuss findings and consider how governments have caused changes to particular groups, for example changes brought about by the High Court's Mabo decision and the *Native Title Act 1993*.

Phase 4 Communicating findings

Core learning outcomes emphasis:

Students complete their inquiry, evaluate their findings, communicate their findings and suggest actions.

Focus questions:

- What is being done and could be done to improve the environment and maintain balance?
- What issues if any there to be debated?

Activity 4 How farming methods impact on ecosystems

Students review their research and ensure that they have answered the key questions posed in Phase 2. Key questions:

- What are the issues and regions being studied?
- How and why are these regions defined?
- Why have these issues arisen?
- What are their impacts or consequences?
- What is being done and could be done to improve the environment?

Students reflect on their entries in their journal and add further information, maps and diagrams to present a logical inquiry.

Students use their findings to prepare for a debate. Topics for a debate may include:

- The sooner all farming is organic farming the better.
- Genetic modification of foods is the way forward.
- Soil is a nation's most important natural resource.
- Farmers form the group contributing most to Australia.
- The sooner we irrigate and farm the desert the better.
- Hydroponics farming is the cure to many environmental problems.
- The contribution to food production by urban dwellers can never be significant.
- All students should study agriculture.

Discuss with students how their involvement in the practical gardening project provided opportunities for them to consider how their farming methods impacted on the environment. Encourage students to share the findings of their inquiry and evaluation of their methods.

Students' journals and their participation in a debate may provide evidence of demonstrations of the core learning outcomes that are the focus of this module.

Optional projects**Resource 2**

Suggested topics:

- (i) Operate a worm farm, converting food scraps into fertiliser for vegetables and herbs. See: www.vnc.qld.edu.au/et8ggqsc.htm - [SOIL](#)
- (ii) Produce organic bug spray, using natural materials to repel insect pests. See: www.vnc.qld.edu.au/et8ggqsc.htm - [PEST](#)
- (iii) Demonstrate the use of grass-based animal fertilisers. See: www.vnc.qld.edu.au/et8ggqsc.htm - [PERMACULTURE](#)
- (iv) Grow food plants hydroponically in containers. See: www.vnc.qld.edu.au/et8ggqsc.htm - [CONTAINER](#)
- (v) Flower growing
- (vi) Mushroom growing through the use of a purchased kit
- (vii) Establish a permanent herb garden
- (viii) Establish a large-scale composting scheme
- (ix) Collect shredded paper for composting
- (x) Capture rain water for use in food plant growing.

Other topics, such as agriculture and weather, permaculture, garden problem solving, plant uses by indigenous people, urban ecology can be found by scrolling through the site: <http://www.vnc.qld.edu.au/et8ggqsc.htm>

Getting started

Resource 1

This resource is to help you plan your gardening project. Begin by talking to any keen gardeners you may know. Describe the size and location of the proposed garden and ask them what vegetables or herbs they suggest you should grow. Explain that your garden is to be as organic and seek advice about preparing the soil.

Search the library for gardening books and perhaps videos of gardening shows that might provide some useful advice. Search the Internet. Refer to <http://www.vnc.qld.edu.au/ORGANIC> for information related to the topics in this module. Refer to <http://www.vnc.qld.edu.au/etveg00.htm> for a flowchart on an organic food growing and nutrient recycling project.

Large plants and many vegetables are suited to farm plots while most herbs and vegetables will grow in tubs that can be moved to suitable locations. Garden nursery staff and labelled seed packets provide information.

Information for each plant should be presented in a table and added to project journals. This table should include:

- Common name:
- Scientific name:
- Where grown (geographical distribution):
- Climatic requirements:
- Planting details (e.g. spacing):
- Growing requirements (e.g. watering details):
- Growing time:
- Size at maturity:
- Food value (nutritional information):
- Labelled diagram of plant (with scale):
- Common pests:
- Other interesting information:

What to grow depends on regional climatic factors. The following table shows some of the vegetables and herbs that may be suitable. Y=suitable, N=not particularly suitable.

	<i>Foam Tub suitability</i>	<i>Farm plot suitability</i>
Vegetable		
Beet / Spinach	Y (small varieties)	Y (all varieties)
Beans	Y (dwarf beans)	Y (all varieties)
Carrot	Y (baby carrots)	Y (all varieties)
Corn	N	Y (small varieties)
Cucumber	N	Y (all varieties)
Capsicum	Y *	Y (all varieties)
Lettuce	Y (leafy varieties)	Y (all varieties)
Pea	Y (snow / dwarf peas)	Y (all varieties)
Rocket Salad	Y	Y
Zucchini	N	Y (all varieties)
Tomato	Y *	Y (suggest cherry tomato)
Radish	Y (baby belle)	Y (all varieties)
Herb		
Shallot / Spring Onion	Y	Y
Basil	Y *	Y
Chives	Y (all types)	Y
Mint	Y (all types)	Y
Parsley	Y (all types)	Y
Thyme	Y	Y

Some vegetables/herbs could be grown in a tub where space is limited (for example, one cherry tomato, one capsicum plant, one basil plant). Planting one of these 'larger' tub plants reduces space available for other plants. If there is enough space and deep soil try potato and sweet potato.

There are several varieties of most vegetable and herbs. Prior reading will determine which is best for your area. In general, the smaller varieties suit tub growing while larger varieties can be planted in farm plots (e.g. silver beet in farm plot, baby beet in tub). Local nursery staff may be able to provide advice.

Support materials and references

Print

- Alexander, D and Rouen, M. (2000) *SOSE for Queensland Book 2*, Heinemann, Melbourne
- Arthur Yates & Co. (1998). *Yates Garden Guide For Australian Gardeners*. Collins, Sydney.
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- Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage. (1993). *How to Compost*. QDEH, Brisbane.
- Roberts, B.R. (1993). *Ground Rules: Perspectives on Land Stewardship*. USQ Press, Toowoomba.
- Searle, A. (1991). *Garden Book of Vegetable Growing*. Treasure Press, Port Melbourne.
- Seymour, J. & Girardet, H. (1987). *Blueprint for a Green Planet*. Angus & Robertson, North Ryde.
- Smith, K. (1990). *The Backyard Organic Garden*. Lothian, Port Melbourne.
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- Woodrow, L. (1996). *The Permaculture Home Garden*. Penguin Books, Melbourne.

Electronic

Websites

(All websites listed were accessed in November 2001.)

ANZFA (food safety and labelling): <http://www.anzfa.gov.au/>

Biotechnology Australia: www.biotechnology.gov.au/ [New redirected URL] 13/11

CSIRO: <http://www.genetech.csiro.au/>

Queensland Department of Natural Resources provide teaching resources related to biodiversity and a range of other relevant topics and they are linked to the Queensland School Curriculum Council core learning outcomes in Science and Studies of Society and Environment - especially at the upper primary school level but they provide useful content knowledge and indication of likely prior student learning. <http://www.dnr.qld.gov.au/resourcenet/education/teaching/index.html>

Queensland Department of Primary Industries
<http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/home/default.html>

Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers website <http://www.qfvg.org.au/> . The websites of various growers organisations provide useful and relevant content for most phases of this module.

Villanova College's environment webpages abound with relevant information. Go to <http://www.vnc.qld.edu.au/> then the environment section and look for information on soil, compost, vegetables and much more.

Acknowledgments

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following organisations and/or people for granting permission to use copyright material:

This sourcebook module should be read in conjunction with the following Queensland School Curriculum Council materials:

Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment Syllabus

Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment Sourcebook Guidelines

Studies of Society and Environment Initial In-service Materials

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