

THE SAN DIEGO FLORAL ASSOCIATION

California GARDEN

March/April 2016

Volume 107 No. 2 \$5.00

Weddings & Gardens

- Floral Designers Speak Out
- Who's Remembering Memorials?
- A Passion for Peppers

Plus: In My Garden . Garden to Table Demonstrated for Children

In My Garden

Garden to Table Demonstrated for Children

By Helen Westcott (as told to Francine Phillips)

Helen Westcott wasn't handed her job as garden coordinator for the Center for a Healthy Lifestyle on a silver platter two years ago. But she was handed a very tiny budget, a trowel, a pair of garden gloves and a chicken named, "Chocolate Chip." The garden is affiliated with the Boys and Girls Club of Solana Beach in conjunction with their ongoing cooking classes so that children learn the processes involved with garden to table eating. Helen plans her garden with the cooking teacher, Misty Johnson. Once they set the menu, Helen and her volunteers, including Sandy Miller, prepare the plots and plant the foods that will make the meals for the next series of classes.

"We plant foods that are driven by the needs of the cooking class, so children get to learn about seeds, irrigation, fertilization, weeding and harvesting food," said Westcott. "We have a composter, a worm farm, drip irrigation and a rain chain and rain barrel to capture water, all leading up to cooking food and eating it."

The quarter-acre plot above the parking lot is surrounded by natural trellises with espaliered trees such as apples and peaches which are "incredibly productive," according to Westcott. There is a banana tree in the corner and a patio covered by lush grape vines that create a shady spot and delicious, sweet treats.

Raised beds in an attractive circle pattern are filled with parsley, basil, carrots and eggplants.

Fun touches like the watering can fountain and the wooden bird house teach the children about the beauty of repurposed items and found objects.

"There are these plants called 'spoon tomatoes' that grow copious amounts of tiny tomatoes," said Westcott. "The kids love them. We also attempt more difficult plants like artichokes and asparagus to learn that sometimes we fail, but either way, we learn."

Westcott and Miller recently planted bushes of berries that will complement the strawberries that grow in the raised beds. Raspberries, blackberries and strawberries can make a great smoothie or tart. And they might want to try adding sprigs of mint or some slivers of lemon peel.

"I definitely think of this as 'my' garden and I'm still learning, too, in terms of what grows where, how much water is needed or how much sun," said Westcott. After spending 26 years with the San Diego Medical Society and as editor of San Diego Physician magazine, she's happy to continue to be involved with health and realizes that teaching the benefits of homegrown food to children is what will improve the health of the next generation.



Photos: Francine Phillips

Helen Harris Westcott and volunteer Sandy Miller and "Chocolate Chip" grow food for the children's cooking classes at the Center for a Healthy Lifestyle.



"Chef Misty" shows children how to pick the produce to use for their meal.



Photos: Francine Phillips

Helen Harris Westcott is the Garden Coordinator for The Boys and Girls Club of Solana Beach. The raised beds and the whimsical fountain help children understand the source of food, water conservation, nutrition and cultivation.





WILLIS ALLEN
REAL ESTATE

Call Ken to buy or sell your California Garden home

KEN BAER, REALTOR
619-248-4200

kenbaer@willisallen.com
www.KenBaer.com

