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GREEN SCENE
by Erika Howsare



Montessori's green island on Pantops
by Erika Howsare, September 10th 09:05am

Just back from a tour of the [Montessori Community School](#) on Pantops, where—no kidding—I spent a solid hour wishing that I could go back to middle school. This was an unfamiliar sensation, but then my middle school experience didn't include pushing wheelbarrowfuls of soil into a geodesic greenhouse where, a few months later, I would harvest crops to feed myself and my fellow students.



That is what I observed the middle-schoolers doing yesterday afternoon, some of them dressed fetchingly in coveralls, in and around the new greenhouse. It was installed this summer and is destined to be the centerpiece of a permaculture curriculum meant to involve students of all age groups. Students and faculty are working on getting the beds set up and planted now, and the idea is that once they have food crops actually producing in there, they'll be providing food for about 90 students' lunches once a week. If their crops do really well, you might even be able to buy surplus produce at the little student-run store on campus.



Students with potatoes, planted last spring and recently harvested.

It's a slice of permaculture heaven up there: beehives, bird sanctuaries, and a designated spot inside the greenhouse where dwarf fruit trees will grow. All around is a car-centric, big-box maze, but the campus feels like an island buffered by trees. School spokesperson Leigh Ann Carver pointed out a lone tomato plant down by the preschool classrooms and explained, "We've always been able to produce some food, which [the students] have enjoyed as a treat. Having the greenhouse makes a huge difference in volume and the seasons of the year they can keep things going."

I did not closely follow the 2008 [controversy](#) over the school's master plan to build new LEED-certified facilities, but I feel glad now that the plans eventually earned county approval. I like what's going on up there, and I hope more schools—especially public schools—get their students digging

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event: pick your type

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in the dirt, making connections to their own food, and observing how plants behave. Not to mention raising bees!

(Photos courtesy Montessori Community School.)

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this is fantastic!! i wish every school kid got the montessori experience...

montessori lover September 14th 10:48am

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