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## Oasis Middle dedicates garden

Students grow, pick vegetables

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Students and teachers at Oasis Middle dedicated the school's new garden Monday afternoon.

Sixth- and seventh-grade science students began the work as a community service project. They said they also want to grow their own vegetables to lower the cost of the school's salad bar.

Administrators broke ground on the garden at 2:45 p.m. while students read poems before getting to the down-and-dirty job of planting the seedlings.

"It started off as a service learning project and I thought it was important for them to learn about nature," said Nancy Dunn, a science teacher at Oasis Middle. "We are also trying to reduce the cost of our salad bar. It is expensive for the kids."

Lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, radishes and peppers were all planted in the new garden - nine vegetables total. Once mature, they will be harvested and fed to students and staff. Herbs from a separate hydroponic garden will be given to the culinary arts program at the high school.

Seeds planted in tin cans at the beginning of September, Dunn said, were grown inside under grow lights confiscated by the Lee County Sheriff's Office and donated to the students.

Kristin Pankey, also a science teacher at Oasis Middle, said principal Chris Terrill challenged the students to initiate a community service project.

Science classes and the Ecology Club were inspired by the garden at Bonita Springs Middle, she said.

"It's neat to see everything come together," said Pankey. "The kids have been working very hard."

Students from the science classes work on the garden one period a day and are welcome to join the Ecology Club in continuing the effort after school.

Art classes have also been lending a hand by designing posters and painting the planting beds.

"We've been inviting any of the students who want to come," she said.

Both science teachers received training at ECHO Farm in Fort Myers to start the garden and use hydroponics. The plants growing in hydroponics use tin cans or bottles wrapped in tube socks, rather than the traditional plastic pipes.

Dunn said the students are taking a trip to ECHO Farms Nov. 4.

Radishes will be the first vegetables harvested after 20 to 30 days, while the rest of the plants will follow. Charts near the garden outline the number of days each vegetable needs to grow before it is picked.

Arlana Henneberry, a member of the Ecology Club and a sixth-grader at Oasis Middle, said her class has been working on the garden for weeks, undergoing experiments that compare and contrast the use of real or artificial light.

She also helped design the look of the garden.

"You get to see how different foods grow and how long it takes," she said. "It's going in our salad bar."

Henneberry is specifically looking forward to eating the cucumbers as soon as they are ready, she said. She also wants to use her new gardening skills in the future.

### Article Photos



MICHAEL PISTELLA

Oasis Middle School seventh-graders Danielle Gebhardt, left, and Madison Menhardt begin planting cucumber plants in the school's new garden Monday. The edible garden is a community service project for the school's fourth-period science classes and Ecology Club. More photos are available online at: [cu.cape-coral-daily-breeze.com](http://cu.cape-coral-daily-breeze.com).

"I'm starting my own garden at my house," she said.

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