

Youth-run food garden helps to educate school children

An idea by a group of young people to clean up the community of Eldorado Park in Johannesburg has expanded into a food garden initiative supported by Shoprite and which is now being used to teach school children the importance of caring for the environment.

When Brynmor Coolman started the Environmentorz group with a handful of young adults in 2016, they wanted to clean up open areas in Eldorado Park that had become illegal dump sites. They also wanted to increase environmental awareness among community members.

“Our belief is that if we educate people about the importance of nature, they will start their own gardens and transform Eldorado Park,” says Brynmor. In April this year, outgoing Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba with help from Shoprite and a team of residents pitched in to clean the open veld along Spruit Avenue and Diamant Street, which had been used as an illegal dump site.

Once the area was cleared, Shoprite provided gardening tools, compost, mulch, seeds, herbs, trees, educational material and training workshops for the establishment of a garden.

Supporting the Environmentorz food garden is part of Shoprite’s ongoing programme to promote food security in the communities it serves. In the last financial year, Shoprite invested in 87 community food gardens across South Africa providing meals for over 400 000 individuals.

“A lot of people in our community want to learn about gardening because they want to be self sufficient and that’s what we’re encouraging with our community garden. We bring groups of school children to the garden to teach them everything we’ve learnt from the Shoprite trainers and to show them how easy it is to start their own gardens,” explains Brynmor.

There are roughly 40 people in the community who help themselves to the spinach, beetroot, tomatoes, peppers, rocket and cabbage being grown in the garden, which is tended to by Brynmor and seven volunteers.

“The training we received has helped a lot. We didn’t know about mulching, which involves putting cut grass around the plants to keep the moisture in the soil. We also didn’t know how to compost our vegetable scraps and how to run a water-wise garden, but thanks to the trainers, we can now share these clever methods with other people in the community keen to start their own gardens,” says Brynmor.

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CAPTION: From left Eldos’ Environmentorz are Kaylene Jegels, Cecilia Jansen, Sherazaad Coolman, Delano Adonis, Doran Adonis and Delron Andrews.