

## The Green Revolution

Nestled between a densely packed forest and a small lake was the town of Elderglen. It was a small town that included a school, a few diners, a grocery store, and a bank. Most of the food that was stocked at the grocery store was shipped from faraway places and sold at a higher than usual price. Mrs. Hazel was the new eighth-grade teacher at Elderglen Elementary School. She was excited to kick the year off with a new group of students and had big plans to teach them all about sustainable living.

On the first day of school, Mrs. Hazel arrived with a basket full of vegetables. The kids saw carrots, tomatoes, potatoes, lettuce, and cucumbers. James, an eighth-grade student, asked, "Mrs. Hazel, why did you bring all of those vegetables?"

"I grew all of these in my own garden," replied Mrs. Hazel, "and I plan to make a delicious salad for lunch."

The students thought Mrs. Hazel was a little odd for bringing in all of those vegetables. They wondered why she didn't just buy a pre-made salad from the store. It just seemed like a lot of work. Mrs. Hazel continued bringing the vegetables, each day introducing students to different ones. Over time, they became more and more intrigued, and Mrs. Hazel noticed this. She wondered what experience students had with growing their own fruits and vegetables, and if students knew the benefits a local community garden could have. After her first day of teaching, she went home and started to plan – how could she teach students about sustainable food practices? How could she show them how food choices affect the environment, economy, and societal health?

## The Green Revolution

Mrs. Hazel went in the next day with a plan! She began by taking the students to the local grocery store to learn more about where the fruits and vegetables they purchased came from. Students learned that fruits and vegetables, and many other products, must travel on journeys that were thousands of kilometres long to reach their local store. James was surprised to learn how this shipment impacted the environment, mainly by the pollution caused by trucks, ships, and planes that moved this produce.

Once the students gained this knowledge, they began to wonder; what alternative option do we have if we want fresh fruits and vegetables? With some brainstorming and research, they asked Mrs. Hazel if they could embark on a new project – to build a sustainable garden on a barren patch of school land. Mrs. Hazel could hardly contain her excitement! They began to plan right away. Each student played a different role. Some researched the best crops to plant in their garden, sustainable use of water for gardening, and even best practices to help maintain the health of the soil they were planting in. James researched about composting and how this could benefit both the community and the garden. Even students who were a little reluctant at first found themselves digging in the soil.

After three weeks of hard work, the seeds were being planted and students were eagerly awaiting the first sprouts of the fruits and vegetables. During this time, the garden caught the eye of the community. As parents learned from students about the benefits of a community garden, they started to spread the word, and quickly others were offering to help tend to the garden or donate seeds and tools. The garden not only grew vegetables, but it grew a new spirit in the community, bringing everyone together.

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With the first harvest, the fruits and vegetables were picked and taken to the local grocery store to be sold, with a portion of the profits going back to the school. Extra fruits and vegetables were used at the school to make and serve meals to students and the community. Mrs. Hazel was happy she could teach students sustainable meals that could be cooked using the crops they grew.

Inspired by the success, Mrs. Hazel suggested the next big step, which was a "Green Market Day." Students were going to sell fruits and vegetables, as well as their recipes, to local community members. They even lead a few seminars on sustainable cooking. Elderglen was a bit skeptical at first, but once they understood all the benefits this could have for the community and school, they were on board. Community members even decided to donate their time and resources to start another garden in the community to help the school and support the entire community.

By the following year, this simple class project had transformed Elderglen and the gardens became a vibrant hub of activity as the principles of sustainability began to take root in the town. They wondered what other sustainable practices they could adapt for the betterment of the community and the Earth. "We grew more than just food; we grew a sustainable community," Mrs. Hazel thought. It all began with a basket of vegetables she brought to school to make a salad.