

Darnall's Garden and Cooking Classroom

- Our school garden was started in 2019 and was used only for after school programming until it was turned into a Garden and Cooking Classroom in 2021.
- Our Garden and Cooking Classroom is run by a full-time credentialed teacher where students in TK-5th come once a week for 45 minutes and receive alternating garden and cooking lessons. 6th-8th grade have the opportunity to choose this class as an elective.
- We have 18 garden beds, of which 16 are dedicated to food production and two are focused on attracting pollinators. We also have an orchard with 14 trees, a 47-container strawberry garden, a three-bin compost, and vermicomposting bins. We have indoor grow light stands and an outdoor nursery that allows us to grow all of our plants from seeds!
- We have added a food forest to another area to continue to beautify our campus and to grow more food for our community. It currently has 7 fruit trees, passion fruit vines, and a variety of edible herbs and flowers.
- Our lessons include topics like composting, companion planting, crop rotation, seasonality and so much more, while incorporating ELA, Math, and Science standards across all grade levels.
- Students receive a weekly book recorded by the Garden and Cooking Educator that is played in their regular classroom to frontload them on concepts that will be taught in their weekly lesson. These books are raffled off to students at the end of each trimester.
- We harvest over 800 pounds of produce annually from our garden, which we use in our Cooking Classroom lessons or give away at our school community Harvest Stands.
- We hold at least 15 harvest stands yearly as our garden continues to provide an abundance for us and our community.
- Some of the favorite recipes we have made include carrot top pesto, rainbow sushi, Japchae, pumpkin donuts, butternut squash mac-n-cheese, and zucchini brownies.
- The Garden and Cooking Educator has raised upwards of \$300,000 in six years for our program through grants and awards.
- In 2024, the Garden and Cooking Educator received the Food Leader Award from a local organization, Berry Good Food Foundation, and the Outstanding Educator of the Year from the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom.
- We hosted a field trip for the attendees of the National School Garden Summit in 2024, including the CEO of Sprouts Farmers Market. Our educator taught a cooking lesson to attendees and our Certified Jr. Master Gardeners (see below for a description of this program) gave garden tours to all in attendance.
- We have also hosted two trainings in our school garden for both the Sage Garden Project and San Diego Ag in the Classroom. We are hosting the Sage Summer Training again this Summer 2025.
- Our Garden and Cooking Educator gave a Lightning Talk on Growing Community in School Gardens on the Main Stage at the National School Garden Summit in 2024. She also wrote an article for the Union Tribune and was featured in the San Diego Business Journal. She also presented on Growing Garden Leaders Through the Jr. Master Gardener Certification at the 2024 Jr. Master Gardener Leader Training and our School Garden was one of the Featured Spotlights.

- Our Garden and Cooking Educator served on the *2025 Growing Good Kids Book Award* Book Committee where she reviewed over 30 garden-themed books to be considered for this annual award.
- For the 2026 Growing School Garden Summit, our Garden and Cooking Educator has been chosen as a reviewer of 400 proposals that will be presented at the summit.
- We have partnered with a local restaurant, Herb and Wood, who has sent out a chef, (including a famous televised chef) on several occasions to do personalized classes with our Jr. Master Gardeners. They even hosted a family-style dinner at an affordable price for our parents in our school garden.

Jr. Master Gardener Program

Our garden educator also teaches a Jr. Master Gardener course after school two days a week for an hour with 4th and 5th graders. This certification program takes students through a variety of hands-on activities to teach them about gardening topics like plant development and soil health. These students are also learning the ins and outs of maintaining our school garden. They also manage our compost program where we collect food waste from the school cafeteria. We ran this program for 4 years and now we have a group of Certified Jr. Master Gardeners who are running a community service program this year called Give to Grow. This program is allowing us to provide families with raised garden beds, soil, and vegetable starts propagated by our Jr. Master Gardeners so they can grow their own food at home!

Give to Grow Program

- We have operated this program for 6 growing seasons.
- It has been funded completely on grant awards.
- 120 families have participated and have received:
 - Garden beds
 - Bags of soil
 - Fertilizer
 - Garden Tools
 - Seedlings grown by our Jr. Master Gardeners
- Over 400 seedlings are given away to other families, community members, and other school gardens every growing season.
- This past year our Certified Jr. Master Gardeners sold over 300 seedlings at local farmers markets.
- [Garden and Cooking Classroom Summary Sheet](#)
- [Growing Community Beyond the School Day Presentation at the Growing School Gardens Summer March 2024](#)
- [Literacy for Life Grants Outstanding Educator Award Video](#)
- [California Bountiful Segment on Our Program and the Full Episode](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Darnall Website](#)

- [Article for the Union Tribune](#)
- See attachments below for the article in the San Diego Business Journal.

Authentic, 'Hands On' Experience for Students

NONPROFITS: Berry Good Supports School's Popular Garden Program

BY KAREN PEARLMAN

JANUARY 11, 2023

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Darnall Charter School garden/cooking educator and coordinator Jessica Eves and students tend the school garden located in the middle of the Redwood Village area campus. Photo by Karen Pearlman

The third time was the charm for the schoolchildren at Darnall Charter and Jessica Eves, garden/cooking educator and coordinator at the school in the Redwood Village area of San Diego.



Jessica Eves
Garden/Cooking Educator and Coordinator
Darnall Charter School

Eves runs the school's thriving garden that draws 500 students each week. She is also a grant writer for Darnall.

After two previous misses with local grassroots nonprofit Berry Good Food, Eves' latest request for grant funding for Darnall's garden was accepted last year, awarded as part of the most recent round of financial assistance through nonprofit Berry Good Food's annual school garden grant program.

Eves, who has been at the school for 20 years, and full-time garden instructor for the past year, said Darnall as a whole is grateful to be a grant recipient.

"We feel honored as this grant recognizes the impact our program has on our community," she said. "This grant will allow us to continue our efforts to grow and strengthen our Garden Classroom program to provide hands-on authentic learning experiences. In order to sustain programs, school gardens need continuous funding to keep their gardens growing strong and healthy."

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NOMINATE NOW	SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL CFO OF THE YEAR 2023 AWARDS	NOMINATION DEADLINE: JAN. 26th @ 5pm P
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Berry Good Food was founded in 2015 by food activist Michelle Ciccarelli Lerach, who was inspired toward food community integration in San Diego County after a stint living on a Sonoma County goat farm. For more than seven years, Berry Good Food has specialized in programs dedicated to food security and food education.

Berry Good Food supports a local and regenerative food system in San Diego and Baja California. It seeks to empower the community by building bridges between farmers, chefs, scientists and citizens to challenge the industrial food system

while advocating for access to healthy food for all.

The organization aims to tackle the barriers – educational, economic, systemic and infrastructural – standing between people in the region and local, sustainably produced food.

Access to Healthy Food

In December, the San Diego-based group awarded a total of \$15,000 to Darnall and six more San Diego County schools that have or are developing hands-on gardening and culinary education creating healthy food access for their surrounding communities.



Jane Bills
Vice President
Berry Good Food

Berry Good Food Vice President Jane Bills said that in addition to a monetary award, grant applicants were given the option of requesting non-monetary services like an expert-led class on gardening techniques, a cooking class, a garden cleanup by Berry Good Food volunteers, and a photosynthesis class using the group's signature "Seeds for the Future" bilingual workbook.

"School gardens is a program our entire Board of Directors likes to get involved with in one form or another and is a magnetic draw for deepening our connection with the community (including) chefs, parents and teachers," Bills said. "It's always gratifying to see how something as simple as a garden cleanup, a cooking class or new garden tools can transform a school's edible garden, especially when the principles of food sovereignty and culinary preparation can reach beyond the classroom to students' families and the community at large."

Bills said that sometimes excess garden produce is shared with food-insecure neighbors and that the lessons of the importance of giving back to one's community "is another excellent building block for garden education students."

Other winners of Berry Good Food's 2022 school garden grant awards were Longfellow K-8 in Linda Vista, The Classical Academy in Escondido, Juarez Elementary in Serra Mesa, Carrillo Elementary in Carlsbad, Clairemont Canyons Academy in Clairemont Mesa and Kumeyaay Elementary in Tierrasanta.

Growing a Food Movement

Each of the 23 applications were evaluated with metrics "that embody the organization's overall mission of growing a food movement in the San Diego County bioregion," Berry Good Food leaders said. The criteria included the school project's capacity for growing food, community need, clear objectives, demographics, long-term goals, mission impact and community support.

Bills said she also appreciated how the community came together last summer to help replenish the organization's garden grant funds. The awards had been on pause for three years because of the pandemic and school closures.

Between June and August last year, Berry Good Foods held a three-part summer dinner series at two spots in Encinitas and one in Bankers Hill. It brought in celebrated chefs like Herb & Wood's Carlos Anthony, Animae's Tara Monsod, Juniper & Ivy's Anthony Wells, Kettner Exchange's Brian Redzikowski, Casa de Flor's Flor Franco and Wrench & Rodent's Davin Waite.

The dinners had multi-course menus featuring ingredients from many local food producers like Omega Azul Seafood out of Baja California and El Faro Seafood LLC in San Diego, Santa Ysabal-headquartered Perennial Pastures Ranch's grass-fed meat, and fresh produce from several local farms, including the Dassi Family Farm in Leucadia.

The dinner series raised \$44,000 to help replenish the funds for Berry Good Food's school garden grant program. The group has awarded more than \$50,000 to 23 schools and educational organizations with garden projects that support healthy eating in San Diego and northern Baja.

For educators like Eves, the funding for schools to teach gardening basics is a

For educators like Eves, the funding for schools to teach gardening basics is a necessity, and said that when the students made the connection to the giant head of cauliflower they harvested in January from a seed they planted six months ago, “their eyes were wide open.”

“It connects them to a basic understanding of food,” she said. “This isn’t something they normally get in education. When kids have the opportunity to grow their own food, it connects them in so many ways.”

Berry Good Food

FOUNDED: 2015

FOUNDER: Michelle Ciccarelli Lerach

PRESIDENT: Jessica Waite

HEADQUARTERS: San Diego

BUSINESS: Nonprofit

REVENUE: Less than \$100,000

EMPLOYEES: All volunteer Board of Directors

WEBSITE: berrygoodfood.org

CONTACT: info@berrygoodfood.org

SOCIAL IMPACT: Framed around the principles of food security and food education, the mission of Berry Good Food is to support a local and regenerative food system in San Diego and northern Baja. We empower our community by building bridges between farmers, chefs, scientists, and citizens to challenge the industrial food system while advocating for access to healthy food for all.

NOTABLE: After a three-year hiatus because of the pandemic, Berry Good Food’s “Seeds for the Future” fundraising dinner was held three times last year in San Diego and raised \$44,000 to replenish its school garden grant fund.