



GENEVRE POIRIER/THE STAR

A construction crew is busy at Milnar Gardens building the Education gazebo for the Roots and Shoots Program, which will start after Easter break.

## Children to learn about roots and shoots

By Genevre Poirier  
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Next month Grade 3 students at Arrowview School will be up to their elbows in dirt.

Arrowview is the first school to participate in the Roots and Shoots Intergenerational Gardening Program at Milnar Gardens. This unique program aims to educate and inspire elementary students in the art and science of horticulture.

"It's the first program at the Gardens involving children," explains Children's Education Programmer Candice Coghill, "We are very excited. It's been a goal to encourage more children and youth groups to use the gardens."

The Roots and Shoots Program pairs Grade 3 students from local schools with Garden Mentors (senior volunteers) for weekly gardening experiences in a living laboratory. The Garden is in the process of creating an outdoor education centre, which will include a learning gazebo, a kiwi

harbour, cold frames, a native edible plant bed, a herb and companion planting bed, a compost demonstration area and an open planting field where the Roots (garden mentors) and Shoots (students) will have the opportunity to grow roots, shoots and fruits they can eat.

"We not only hope that the students will learn about horticulture, but that they will also develop a connection with their mentor and a love of gardening," says Coghill.

The program is designed so that each class can be taken on its own or as part of a series. This gives teachers the opportunity to take part in the program without signing up for eight weeks. Each lesson is different, from learning about earth worms, to composting to edible plants. The program is hands-on oriented and students do get dirty. But, it's all part of the fun. The staff at Milnar Gardens copied the idea from Elizabeth Gamble Garden in California, which has been running the program for years.

This program was adapted for the weather and growing conditions on the Island, but the principles are the same.

"They were so helpful. They encouraged us to try it and lent us all their education material," adds Coghill.

The community has also welcomed the program and many organizations have donated supplies, such as seeds and construction material.

Coghill hopes this is the beginning of something great and looks forward to seeing more young faces around the gardens.