

Success Story: Terri's Treehouse Woodruff, WI



Terri's Treehouse is a unique early learning program in Wisconsin's Northwoods. During the summer months, the school's 80' x 80' garden, with its gathering center, greenhouse, children-friendly beds, outdoor science center, and compost, is a hotbed of learning and play. But garden-based education doesn't come to a halt with the first frost! "The garden is transformed into a magical winter discovery area and the kitchen is packed with lights growing herbs and vegetables for daily meals," says Program Director Emilymae King.

For the past two years, when it's too cold to bring the classroom out to the garden, Terri's Treehouse brings the garden to the classroom. In addition to moving two garden beds into the classroom itself, students help transplant the garden's herbs into the kitchen's mini-greenhouse so they can continue enjoying fresh, homegrown herbs in their lunches. The plants – including rosemary, lavender, thyme, popcorn plant, and sage – benefit not only from a safe and warm environment, but from the tender care of loving little hands. "We have a schedule that rotates day-by-day," King explains, "so there's always a child taking care of watering, weeding, and pruning." Then, come spring, students help to bring the herbs back to their summer home in the outdoor garden.



At Terri's Treehouse, growing the herbs is just the beginning. Thanks to the Try It Tuesday curriculum, 3 – 5-year-old students get to prepare and try new, wholesome foods, including using ingredients such as the herbs that they have tended and grown themselves. And many of the Try It Tuesday delicacies are a nod to traditions of the local Native American community.

The program helps kids develop a powerful connection to their food. "Try It Tuesdays helps children feel in control and gives them a sense of pride when they prepare and eat the meals, it really doesn't cost much, and it doubles as a learning moment," says King. "Everything they eat is procured locally so this continues to set a pathway to

December 2016

This story was produced by the Wisconsin School Garden Network, a program of Community GroundWorks and the UW Madison Environmental Design Lab. For more information, visit www.wischoolgardens.org.



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healthy farm-to-table philosophy long through the winter months.” Parents even get a chance to try the food during Tuesday pick-up, and the kids bring a recipe home so they can make favorites again and again.

King sees the children responding to the program. “My preschoolers used to be finicky and now they asked for vegetables!”

As the weather gets colder, students at Terri's Treehouse are already keeping warm and cozy with delicious winter recipes. The center is even helping to revive heirloom crops in the gardens and hearts of their community. Recently, students enjoyed Gete-Okosomin soup made from an heirloom squash that the center is helping to revive. You can check out the story behind this incredible recipe – and the recipe itself! – kindly shared by Terri's Treehouse.



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