From a longtime vacant lot in the Winburn neighborhood, a Garden of Eatint is emerging literally out of the ground. Begun last fall and located at 1169 Winburn Drive next to the Community Action Council, the Winburn Community Art Garden is a collaborative effort between the Community Action Council, Russell Cave Elementary School, Sustainable Communities Network, the Northeast Lexington Initiative, neighborhood residents and support from various other groups. Children and adults are working side-by-side to create a beautiful space that nourishes the mind body and spirit, respects diversity, and is fun!

Art pieces can be found throughout the garden on our painted raised beds, garden-sign and numerous recycled objects. All artwork and structures were completed using found objects as we stress the need to recycle and reuse to our youth (and ourselves!). Our beautiful mural is the product of the UNESCO Art Miles Project coordinated locally by Jarah Jones and our native plants were furnished by Shooting Star Nursery. We received pavers from our kindred friends of the Dunbar Memorial Garden and placed these around trees to use as raised beds for spring bulbs.

The Winburn Community Art Garden is very much part of the national urban gardening movement that strives to reclaim empty lots, restore our health, provide a space for intergenerational and multicultural dialogue and appreciation and foster a much needed sense of human sacred connection with Mother Earth.

This spring we have had diverse folks coming to the garden from the Bluegrass Community and Technical College, UK Green Thumb, the Dunbar Memorial Garden, youth with drug offenses assigned by the court to do community service, people from the neighborhood, people originally from Egypt, Mexico, Africa and South America have all blessed our table. Young children are finding red wigglers or huge night crawlers and squealing with delight and discovery. Neighborhood residents who walk by are invited into the space linger, put their hands in the dirt and also find community.

A monoculture of simply green grass is fast becoming a symphony of color and size, a palette of different tastes and smells and a library of nomenclature and cultural expressions. Daffodils, hyacinths, crocuses and tulips planted last December are in bloom and are proclaiming that spring is here. Four weeks ago we planted snow peas and they’re jumping like acrobats out of the ground. So far this spring we have also planted fruit trees, blackberry bushes, grapevines, strawberries, lettuce, cabbage, broccoli and different herbs. We are preparing space and for warm weather crops which will include a Three Sisters Garden, a Native American tradition of planting corn, squash and beans together. Of course with our Latino community friends cilantro, tomatillos and hot peppers will soon follow. Okra, collards greens, green beans and squash will soon be ready for the pot. I think Martha and the Vandellas would agree that it will be a joy to see all these plants “dancing in the streets” of Winburn!

The Winburn Art Garden serves as an outdoor classroom and extension of the school learning environment for students at Russell Cave Elementary School. This past December I visited Alice Waters and the Edible Schoolyard in Berkeley California where the state law requires that every school must have a school garden that is integrated into the entire curriculum. Some states but not yet Kentucky recognize the importance of school gardens and outdoor classrooms to student achievement and mental well-being.

School gardens offer numerous benefits to children

School gardening has been shown to increase self-esteem, help students develop a sense of ownership and responsibility, help foster relationships with family members, and increase parental involvement.

School gardening promotes higher quality learning. Students tend to learn more and better when they are actively involved in the learning process.

School gardening promotes higher quality learning. In a project that involved integrating nutrition and gardening among children in grades one through four, the outcomes went well beyond an understanding of good nutrition and the origin of fresh food, to include enhancing the quality and meaningfulness of learning.

School gardening enhances learning for all students. Children with learning disabilities, who participated in gardening activities, had enhanced nonverbal communication patterns of attention to each other and to the biosphere, patterns that grow out of curiosity and respect and allow for wonder and learning.

You can see more pictures of the Winburn Community Art Garden as well as other community garden projects at www.sustainlex.org. We meet every Saturday from 1pm - 3pm. and welcome volunteers. Friends of Winburn Art Garden are encouraged to donate funds, help write grants, bring veggie plants, trees and flowers and much more! For more information, contact Catrena Lewis 859.294.5249, Clewis@commaction.org, or Jim Embry 859.312.7024, jgembr0@cs.com.