

EduPlant announces competition winners

EduPlant - a food gardening and greening programme that teaches schools to implement permaculture principles to grow gardens - has announced the winning schools across five categories.



"These school gardens are where the magic takes place," says Sue Spies, Facilitator at EduPlant. "They reach out to community resources to provide a way of living by growing good quality food."

The permaculture food gardening programme was developed to motivate schools and their communities to grow food naturally and care for their environments sustainably. This year's awards have seen schools that have excelled at designing projects to improve their environment through sustainable resource use and management, and use their projects for active learning.

"This year's winning Mentoring school epitomises what this programme is about."

The judges said that "since 1999, this school has expanded to become a mentor to a further 31 schools, sharing their knowledge and expertise to develop skills and providing jobs to surrounding community members."

Each of the 60 finalist schools are winners and all received R1,500 in cash, a bag full of educational resources, stationary, seeds and other gardening materials. Provincial winners each received a gardening tool set worth R5,000. The first prize for the Emerging, Intermediate and Advanced categories received R15,000 cash, while second prize winners in each category received R10,000 cash. Third prize in each category received R5,000. All these category finalists received a two week Permaculture Design Course for the educators.

Winners in the Mentoring category received R25,000, second place received R15,000 and third place R10,000 cash. Furthermore, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has provided funds for a further 18 deserving educators to attend a certified Permaculture Design Course.

The winning schools are:

Emerging category

1. Roseway Waldorf School
2. Hout Bay High School
3. Mabandla Primary School

Intermediate category

1. Siphakamile Primary School
2. Alabama Primary School
3. Mmusi Primary School

Advanced category

1. Izwilesizwe Primary School
2. Phambanisa Primary School
3. Wardia Primary School

Mentoring category

1. Pula Madibogo Primary School
2. Mailakgang Primary School
3. Beretta Primary School

Provincial

1. Jamangile High School
2. Lereng Primary School
3. Mlokotwa-Dube Primary School
4. Nobanda Primary School
5. Tingwazi Primary School
6. Mbatini Primary School
7. Kutlwanong Primary School
8. Moedi Secondary School
9. Emfudisweni Pre-primary School

"What is most notable about this year's competition is that the previously weaker provinces in terms of food gardens are definitely now on the same level as the traditionally strong provinces, particularly among the Food & Trees for Africa cluster school areas. This means the programme is working," a statement from the judges read.

"The EduPlant Awards focus on permaculture, the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive systems that have the diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems. The principles work with rather than against nature,

combining landscapes and people, and providing food, energy and shelter," says Jeunesse Park, Founder of Food & Trees for Africa and EduPlant. "Entrants were required to submit information and proof of how they are developing their school environments according to basic permaculture principles, feeding children, running outreach projects and integrating their projects into the curriculum."

The EduPlant programme started 20 years ago and has been funded and supported by Engen for the past four years and the Woolworths Trust for over 10 years. This year a previous partner, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries re-joined the programme. "Over the years, EduPlant has grown from strength to strength owing to the increased need for food security and healthy environments, as well as the negative impacts of climate change. The financial support from our partners and supporters ensures EduPlant's success," concludes Park.

Tasneem Sulaiman-Bray, Engen GM of Corporate Affairs, says Engen has been a sponsor of the EduPlant programme since 2010. "Environmental responsibility is a big part of our business and we invest significant resources into it. We are proud to be a part of a sustainable and socio-economically meaningful programme of this stature."

"As South Africa's leading food retailer, we commend the winners for their efforts to advance their quality of life through improved food security and nutrition," says Zinzi Mgolodela, Head of Transformation at Woolworths. "We were especially delighted to hear that 50% of the schools invited in the finals this year were there for the first time. That tells us that the EduPlant programme is inspiring new schools to start gardens and that the cluster workshops and mentoring is working." Mgolodela concluded.

The competition recognises the efforts of participating schools at the different levels; the Emerging Category is for schools that have implemented a permaculture food gardening project at their school and are first time entrants in the EduPlant competition; the Intermediate Category is for previous EduPlant finalists who have not won a prize other than attending the finals event; the Advanced Category is for schools that have implemented and maintained a permaculture project at their school for more than 12 months and/or have been a previous EduPlant winner; and the Mentoring Schools Category, supports, encourages and acknowledges schools that have been excelling in the EduPlant programme and that have won in the competition previously.