**Case Study for Guardian Butterfly Garden Development**

The idea of developing the land at the front of Guardian Childcare and Early Learning Centre into an outdoor classroom and butterfly garden grew from the children’s interest and knowledge gained in raising butterflies and planting butterfly attracting plants over the last two years.

The Preschool Teacher and Sustainability Champion, Lisa Weidenbach noticed through her provocations that children were continuously inspired to study the life cycle of caterpillars.  The caterpillars in the classroom gave the children a sense of belonging and new children were fascinated to point out the caterpillars to their families.  Through ongoing interactions with caterpillars, children learnt the importance of respecting the homes of the caterpillars and some children enjoyed handling caterpillars and butterflies.

The Preschool children engaged in our Butterfly project through researching books, paintings and observing butterflies up close in jars, observatories and in our garden.  Using magnifying glasses children were able to study the different wing patterns and engage in various creative experiences to explore wing patterns with colour and recycled materials.  The children developed other skills such as fine motor development and problem solving through creating their own interpretations of life cycles.

The Preschool children developed their numeracy skills through comparing sizes of caterpillars and predicting the duration of time for chrysalises and cocoons to emerge.  The children watered their small butterfly garden daily and used a ruler to measure the height of the plants.  The children documented on Insect Tallys to record the number of butterflies in our garden.  The Preschool children have developed their literacy skills through sharing theories and ideas verbally, butterfly role play and writing letters, words and numerals.  Children are invited to share books, artwork and information about butterflies from home during our Yarning Circle.

We raised over 130 Monarch butterflies during 2020-2021 and released them into our yard.  The children noticed the Monarch butterflies enjoyed feeding on our purple statice, bottlebrush and grevillea bushes.  Our Butterfly project successfully provided multiple opportunities for children to plant seeds, seedlings and care for the environment. Lisa documented the butterfly attracting flowers that the children had planted from seed and registered St. Clair Guardian Childcare and Early Learning Centre as a Butterfly Friendly Site with the Butterfly Conservation of S.A.

We continued learning about caterpillars and when we integrated Aboriginal perspectives and listened to Dreamtime stories we discovered why caterpillars take different durations of time to emerge into butterflies.  The children noticed that we find different caterpillars in our environment from May to July.  We raised approximately 100 tiger moth cocoons over July 2020.  We continuously documented our learning and shared our discoveries with families on StoryPark daily. Every child had an opportunity to contribute to our evolving Butterfly Project Book by sharing illustrations and interpretations of their thoughts and ideas.  Families supported us by bringing in illustrations of butterflies, Aboriginal dot paintings, caterpillars and acanthus leaves from their gardens.  We made children’s learning visible on the walls in the Piazza for our community to enjoy.

Lisa connected with the Charles Sturt Council and liaised with a community gardener who offered to volunteer her time with Guardian on a weekly basis to share her knowledge of attracting butterflies to the garden and create a large butterfly garden with us. The children developed strong relationships with our volunteer Maija and became knowledgeable in talking about what our garden needs for butterflies to survive. Lisa observed how Maija’s contributions was building strong community connections and decided to connect with Stephen Fuller from Australian Association for Environmental Education to ask for assistance with our Butterfly Garden. Stephen gladly offered to assist us and has taught us a lot about restoring our land to promote biodiversity to attract local butterflies. We have discovered that over 40 species of butterflies native to Kaurna (Adelaide plains and hills) have lost their habitat through vegetation clearing.

We are working together as a team to build an understanding and knowledge of plants that attract butterflies and learn how landscaping with native plants is a more sustainable practice and a common host to a variety of butterflies. Stephen suggested for Lisa to liaise with Naomi Findlay to trial AAEE SA’s Science Inquiry Unit of Work on Butterflies: Engaging with Nature for teachers which Lisa readily began and connected with other passionate teachers in SA to complete the AAEE SA’s Professional Learning ‘Introduction to Butterfly Gardening in Schools.’ Lisa now implements these science lessons and provides feedback to Naomi about her development with teaching about butterflies with Preschool children.