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# An extra-juicy Big Bite incentive!



When your school achieves each Big Bite in the Victorian Kids Eat Well program, you will receive a mature Citrus Emperor Mandarin Tree. This incentive, fully funded by IPC Health, is in addition to the standard Small Bite and Big Bite incentives provided as part of Vic Kids Eat Well.

## Why mandarin trees?

Evidence-informed research highlights the importance of planting trees in school environments for many reasons. Trees and other green spaces fulfill both ecological and educational purposes. Green spaces enhance students' learning experience and supports environmental sustainability.

Research shows that planting trees helps reduce urban heat, improves air quality, and requires minimal maintenance. Fresh mandarins are not only delicious and packed with nutrients, but they are also easy for small hands to peel and eat. They can even be used in cooking activities.

## Benefits to your school community

### Integrates with curriculum

Growing a mandarin tree integrates easily into VCAA curricula. Relevant units include 'Design and Technologies' Foundation to Level 10, including 'How plants and animals are grown for food, clothing and shelter' (VCDSTC015, 025); 'How food is selected and prepared for healthy eating' (VCDSTC016, 026); How and why food and fibre are produced in managed environments (VCDSTC035, 046, 057); The role of food preparation in maintaining good health and the importance of food safety and hygiene (VCDSTC036, 047, 058).

### Healthy Eating Habits

Enjoying live, growing mandarin trees encourages students to snack on fresh, nutritious fruit. Engaging in the planting, growing and harvesting process fosters a deeper appreciation for healthy eating, making students less likely to reach for processed snacks. Mandarins grow in winter, during school terms, giving your students a vitamin C boost. Free fruit also enhances food security.

### Food System Integration

Mandarin trees provide easy access to fresh produce and can be integrated into your food system. Incorporating these fruits into meals saves money and teaches students about food production, sustainability and the importance of healthy diets.

### Climate Change Mitigation

Planting mandarin trees contributes to climate change mitigation by absorbing carbon dioxide and reducing greenhouse gases. Their presence lowers urban temperatures and improves air quality, creating healthier environments. Engaging students in this process fosters awareness of sustainability and the importance their individual contribution to environmental stewardship.



# What does the evidence say?

Planting fruit trees contributes to active health living, sun safety, helps combat climate change, supports increased food security and improved food systems.



## Aligns with sustainability

Engaging students in tree planting fosters environmental awareness and community involvement, aligning perfectly with the Tree Planting Day which comes along with this incentive.

## Enhances Academic Performance

Students in 'green' environments show better concentration and problem-solving skills.

## Mitigates Urban Heat Islands

Planting trees along footpaths effectively mitigates urban heat islands. A line of trees creates a "green corridor," supporting active transport while cooling the surrounding microclimate.

## Health benefits

Trees planted along footpaths in schools can increase their use, promoting physical activity and active transport. Trees are proven to improve air quality and improve mental health and wellbeing by reducing stress and anxiety.

## The 3-30-300 Rule

Research supports the 3-30-300 Rule, which highlights the need for at least 3 trees per urban building, 30% canopy coverage and 300m proximity to green spaces.



## Improves Sun Safety

Trees provide shade, cool the air, and act as natural barriers against UV radiation. This aligns with sun safety policies and the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic), which mandates effective sun protection strategies in schools.

## References

Study/Resource	Discussion
Does your school have enough trees? Here's why they're great for kids and their learning. The Conversation, Jan 2025.	This discusses the integration of green schoolyards into educational practices, highlighting barriers teachers face and benefits of outdoor learning for children's development. This outlines the concept of outdoor classrooms, their benefits for student engagement, health, and learning, and provides strategies for creating effective outdoor learning environments.
The impact of street greenery on active travel: a narrative systematic review. NIH, Yu, 2024.	This emphasises the importance of plants, particularly trees, in outdoor learning environments, detailing benefits for shade, play, and educational opportunities.
Schools encouraged to help create more green spaces as part of trees program, Greater Western Water, Feb 2025.	GWW cites geomapping data showing Melbourne's west has the lowest tree canopy cover in Melbourne at 5.5%, far lower than the east, which at 29.5% is in line with Government objectives. Highlights diverse benefits of tree planting.
Exposure to greenery during children's home-school walks: Socio-economic inequalities in alternative routes. Khanian et al., 2024.	This research highlights the importance of greenery in children's routes to school, linking exposure to green spaces with improved physical and mental health outcomes.
Acute canopy deficits in global cities exposed by the 3-30-300 benchmark for urban nature. Croeser et al., 2024.	This study discusses the health and wellbeing benefits of urban green spaces guided by the '3-30-300' rule. Lead researcher Dr Thami Croeser said better canopy cover was urgently needed to cool down our cities. "We know depression, anxiety, obesity and heatstroke are more prevalent in urban areas lacking access to shady tree canopy and green open spaces," said Croeser.
Sun and UV Protection Policy. Dept of Education, Victoria, 2025.	This Victorian Gov't policy advocates for school environments that support sun protection behaviours to minimise the risk of health problems from sun overexposure, including creating shade.
Piloting Sustainable Fruit Tree Planting and Maintenance in Schools and Local Communities. WJ Mundolo Foundation, 2024.	This pilot study concluded that planting fruit trees in schools and communities promotes environmental stewardship and sustainable agricultural practices while improving local nutrition.
Strategies to increase shade in public playgrounds: Evidence review, Cancer Council NSW, 2022.	This study highlights that providing shade increases community engagement and outdoor activities in Passive Recreational Areas (PRAs) by nearly four times.
Trees for Cooler and Greener Streetscapes, Planning Victoria, 2019.	This study highlights the crucial role of trees in streetscapes for mitigating urban heat islands (UHI) and enhancing local microclimates. As noted, "a line of trees along a street becomes a 'green corridor', supporting active transport while creating a cooler microclimate grid across the city."
Associations of traffic-related air pollution and greenery with academic outcomes among primary schoolchildren. Claesen et al., 2021.	This Melbourne study found green spaces can enhance cognitive development and academic performance in children. Greenery around primary schools was positively associated with higher scores in Reading, Numeracy and Grammar & Punctuation.