

Rainbow Child Care Centre arbour

Hidden away up on the third floor at Westfield Marion Shopping Centre is Rainbow Child Care Centre, a lovely nurturing haven for children whose parents are working or studying.

Despite being surrounded by towering walls and concrete, Teng and Treena are committed to creating a natural environment for the children and educating them about the miracle of how food grows.

We have a special relationship with the staff and children here, having first installed two raised veggie garden beds on the outdoor rooftop play area 4 years ago. Since then we have maintained those veggie gardens and installed four more beds, growing fruit trees and a rampant passionfruit up there!



Rainbow children picking baby snowpeas



Passionfruit and young fruit trees along the side fence

We are always excited about installing beds at Rainbow. It normally involves arriving at the Westfield shopping centre in the dark early hours, and like a secret commando operation, we have to work fast and smart to get multiple wheelbarrow loads of soil up to the third floor before shopping centre clients begin arriving.

The new feature we were installing for the play area this time consisted of two garden beds of different heights, joined by an arching arbour over which vines will grow (with edible produce of course).

Construction over three days...

Monday: Roger made the side panels for the two beds off site, having first carefully measured that they would fit into the lift. He delivered them to Rainbow on Monday afternoon.

Tuesday: The panels were put together on site to make the two little beds. This was done in the place where they would be situated.



You can see that the first bed is higher than the second bed. This is a design feature to allow the passionfruit both extra soil space below and extra sunlight above.

After the beds were built on Tuesday, irrigation pipes had to be connected, and the steel arbour constructed.



You can see the arches for the arbour are in place and the supporting horizontal rods are on the ground waiting to be attached to the arches.

Wednesday was 'D' Day: Up at 5am, the truck and trailer were loaded with equipment and soil and we arrived at Westfield Marion at 6am with pre-arranged access to the locked lifts.

We parked in front of the shopping centre entrance with our trailer load of soil and two wheelbarrows. Sally was stationed in the trailer with shovel and soil, filling up the wheelbarrows and taking them to the lift.



Arrival time at Westfield Marion: 06.00...and still dark.



Another day, another 20 wheelbarrows full of soil...

Roger pushed the wheelbarrow loads of soil up to the third floor, into the child care centre, out on to the roof, up the ramp and then tipped the soil into the new garden beds.
Repeat.
Repeat.

Repeat.
Many times...



Swapping an empty wheelbarrow for a full one. Precision timing with the lift doors.



Up the ramp and into the beds

With all the soil in, we could then finish off the job: connecting dripper lines, painting the arbour black and getting the first plants in. Along both the inside and the outside of the lower bed, we attached low seating so the children can sit together inside or outside the arbour.



The finished raised beds and the arbour.

Pumpkin magic

In the deeper bed we planted a passionfruit, a pumpkin and a tromboncino (we love tromboncinos!). In the smaller bed, we planted 8 strawberries, 3 tomatoes and some climbing cucumbers.



The pumpkin vines have started to climb up and over the arch.

We can't wait to see this sweet little arbour in a couple of months, total covered in leafy, edible plants with hanging pumpkins, cucumbers and tromboncos.
What a delight it will be for the Rainbow staff and children!!!