



Blind school students feel the joy of harvesting

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Kochi: For most students, the gardening project at schools is fun and they enjoy running around and feeling the saplings and watering the plants.

For the residential students of the School for the Blind, Aluva, gardening is a different experience and it makes their Onam days special. They have started harvesting vegetables from their own garden. They have grown tomatoes, long beans, lady's finger, bitter gourds, etc. on the one-acre plot and the school's kitchen garden.

However, there's more learning that goes beyond gardening and planting. They learn to walk through narrow spaces, feel the unexpected bumps, highs and lows of the field.

The school management and teachers started off with safe food in mind for the 52 student residents. They have planted 10 varieties of vegetables and the harvest of some of the crop has already begun. "We brought the students to plant the saplings and water



Students of the School for the Blind, Aluva, at their vegetable garden

them. They come in to pick the grass and do it in such a meticulous and clean way. They learn and concentrate on the sense of smell and touch and going around feeling the earth," said headmistress Jigi Varghese.

Student agriculture minister of the school Mohammed V A leads the kids to the farm. He is part of the full cabinet led by student chief minister Adnan Mohammed. Vegetables are cultivated on the one-acre plot of the neighbouring vocational training school for

the blind. The students are brought to the farm area in a bus and slowly hand-held and led to the saplings where they clear the grass based on the instructions of the teachers.

"Our kitchen garden has long beans and tomatoes which are used in the canteen. We try to ensure that all that is cultivated here is consumed by the children," said school administrator Fr John Jacob, who initiated the project with the help of CMFRI's Krishi Vigyan Kendra horticulture scientist Shoji Edison.