

Creating partnerships for a better future

KAYLYNN PALM

Entrepreneurs were briefed last week on a programme run by a public benefit organisation that calls for them to share their business savvy with school principals.

The information session was held at the Oude Molen Academy of Science and Technology in Pinelands on Wednesday February 3. It was run by Merlinda Abrahams, from Partners for Possibility (PfP), which is the flagship programme of Bellville-based non-profit organisation, Symphonia for South Africa (SSA).

Ms Abrahams says PfP offers a creative solution to the current education crisis by forging partnerships between school principals and business people as well as with government and the social sector.

SSA's vision is quality education for all children in South Africa by 2025. PfP was running in 129 schools last year and they want to add 99 more schools this year.

Cherie Williams-Meyer, the principal of Cornflower Primary School in Lentegeur and Montague Drive Primary in Portland, said the school had been involved with the programme since October last year.

Ms Williams-Meyer said her partnership with a life coach had been beneficial.

"We have developed a relationship and are working plan as to what we are going to address at the school. Because he runs a business, he is assisting me with business skills



■ Guests at the event at Oude Molen Academy for Science and Technology in Pinelands.

because in the teaching degree, we don't really focus on business. This will be helpful for our school and will benefit us in terms of finances," she said.

Ms Williams-Meyer said plans included active staff and community involvement. "This is a school in the community and belongs to pupils, parents and the community, with their assistance and support, the school can be even better than

what it currently is," she said.

The PfP Programme was founded in 2010 by director and founder Louise van Rhyn. She was the first business leader to partner with a principal in an effort to improve a school's education outcomes.

"The PfP initiative speaks to the idea that enhancing the quality of education, improving the school environment and encouraging

engagement between parents and teachers are meaningful and attainable goals that would provide an upward spiral of real change in society," she said.

Proponents of PfP believe that by placing the school at the centre of community, a radical transformation can be achieved in the education sector.

"There is a direct correlation between good school leadership



■ Merlinda Abrahams from PfP

and educational outcomes. Most school principals in South Africa have not been equipped with the skills and knowledge for their critically important leadership role.

"Our organisation exists to ignite change in South Africa by enlisting a community of passionate, active citizens. We can all walk – and work – together for our children's future," said Ms Abrahams.

Try out some water saving tips for veggie gardens

OWN CORRESPONDENT

With much of the country suffering the effects of drought, the City of Cape Town implemented Level 2 water restrictions at the beginning of the year.

As a result, residents of Cape Town who use potable water in their gardens are only allowed to water them three times a week – for one hour before 9am or after 4pm on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays – with those who use borehole water encouraged to do the same.

But the implementation of water restrictions doesn't have to mean a dry and dreary garden.

This, the third article in a five-week series, looks at how to maintain a vegetable garden when there are water restrictions.

A water wise vegetable and herb garden has the benefits of not only saving you water but is also a source of healthy nutrition. Nick Stodel, MD of Stodels Nurseries, gives advice and tips to keep your home grown in ship shape in this hot, dry season.

● Water wise beds

Keep traditional square or rectangular beds that channel the water to the plants – making the beds slightly lower will help to create a pocket for the water.

But be careful when walking on the soil between the plants, you don't want it to become compact and decrease absorption and increase evaporation.

● Water saving granules

These can save up to 50% on water usage as well as give your plants a slow release feeding. Combine products such as Aqua-soil with the soil used for planting.

It helps store water in the soil

and makes it available when the plant is dry.

● Shade nets

You can either cover your whole veggie or herb garden with shade netting or those areas where the sun is a lot harsher. This reduces evaporation and allows faster absorption of water.

Remember, thorough, less frequent watering encourages the roots to grow deeper and utilise the moisture deeper in the ground. In this way the plants can thrive during times of drought or little watering.

● Mulching

Remember to work organic compost into the soil to hold water for longer periods of time and sprinkle bark chips or other mulch on top to prevent evaporation.

Mulching is one of the quickest, easiest and most cost effective ways to conserve water in your garden.

Mulch is any substance that can be placed on the soil surface, around plants, to keep the moisture in the soil. There are two sort of mulch – organic and inorganic.

Organic mulch, mostly from plant sources are the best sorts of mulch. They break down along with the help of earthworms to enrich and condition the soil.

You can use compost, grass cuttings, pine needles, milled bark, straw, peat, crushed mealie cobs, autumn leaves and shredded paper.

Inorganic mulch is made up of substances, or materials, which do not break down but serve the purpose of keeping moisture in the soil, for example gravel, pebbles and stones.

Mulching helps to retain mois-

ture in the soil and prevents erosion, helps prevent water guzzling weeds from growing and improves the soil texture.

Organic mulches attract earthworms and other micro-organisms which aerate the soil, lowers the soil temperature so there is less surface evaporation

Before applying mulch, loosen the soil to improved ventilation.

Sandy soil needs a thicker layer of mulch than clay soil.

Leave a space between the stem of a plant and don't put mulch over seeds that haven't germinated as they need light and oxygen to germinate.

"Enjoy the 'fruits' of your labours and keep those veggie and herb gardens thriving during this hot and dry season," says Mr Stodel.

"There's nothing nicer than eating home grown food straight from the garden."

● Information provided by Stodels. For more water wise and water saving tips you can visit <http://www.waterrestrictions.co.za> or www.stodels.com

Give-away

What are you doing to save water or keep your garden healthy during the water restrictions?

We'd like to hear from you – and have two R500 Stodels vouchers that we'll be giving to the reader who submits the best tips.

If you like, you can also send us a picture of your garden.

To enter, send your full name and surname, your address and your water saving tips – with Water Wise in the subject line – to roshiela.moonsamy@inl.co.za Entries close at 10pm on Sunday February 28.



■ Bark mulch can help reduce evaporation from the soil.



■ Grass cuttings can be used for mulching.