

LEARNING ABOUT AQUAPONICS

On Thursday, April 19, students from Emmanuel College Warrnambool's Year 10 Agriculture and Horticulture class travelled to Ballarat to inspect two long standing Aquaponics systems and to collect the rainbow trout for our own system back at Emmanuel College.

First stop was a visit to a keen Ballarat Permaculture Guild member's private Aquaponics system. Ian walked the students through his own medium scale system which included a 9000ltr set up running approximately 20 bathtub sized grow beds along with 10 large IBC grow beds. Ian presented us with valuable information around the growing media differences, flow rate adjustments, fish and plant health tips and tips for power outages. Ian's system is similar to Emmanuel College's new system so the advice was timely. Next stop was Lazlow's incredible system using wicker beds and constant flooding as opposed to Ian's and our own self draining system. Here the students were able to see a different style of aquaponics and also a different philosophy to running the system. Lazlow used homemade maggot traps and pond algae systems to supply his own fish food and also used meat from his chicken farming hobby as bait in the maggot traps and to feed the trout! This system was highly self-reliant and cost effective giving us ideas for future expansion of our own system.

After lunch we headed off to the Ballarat Hatchery where Frank and Brian gave us a full run down of their program from harvesting and fertilising the fish eggs to hatching the alvin, feeding the fry and separating the fingerlings (yes, we know all the terminology now!). Commencing in the late 1800's, the Ballarat Hatchery has a long history and is an important part of Ballarat, supplying 6000 trout per year to Lake Wendouree and tens of thousands of trout to destinations all over Australia.

All up, the trip was a great success and has complimented and enhanced our new venture into the exciting world of aquaponics!

Ben McKenzie, Design Technology Coordinator

Top picture: Students discussing the effects of water pH on fish health and plant growth with Ian.

Bottom picture: Students collecting our own fish from the hatchery race.

