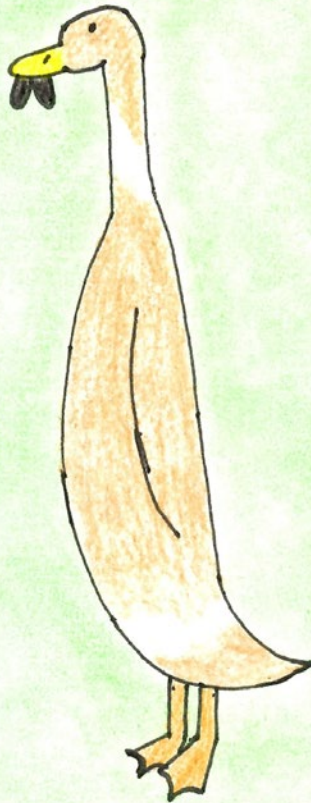


Caterpillar Catastrophe



Penelope Longstaff
Narrabri Public School





Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by Peekdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

www.envirostories.com.au

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Caterpillar Catastrophe

Author: Penelope Longstaff

Teacher: Mrs. Allison

School: Narrabri Public School

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Ashlee sat in her favourite pine rocking chair on the porch that overlooked her luscious, green garden.

Her well-worn denim overalls were covered in dirt from her morning chores. Millie, Ashlee's beloved Border Collie, sat at her feet destroying her toy.





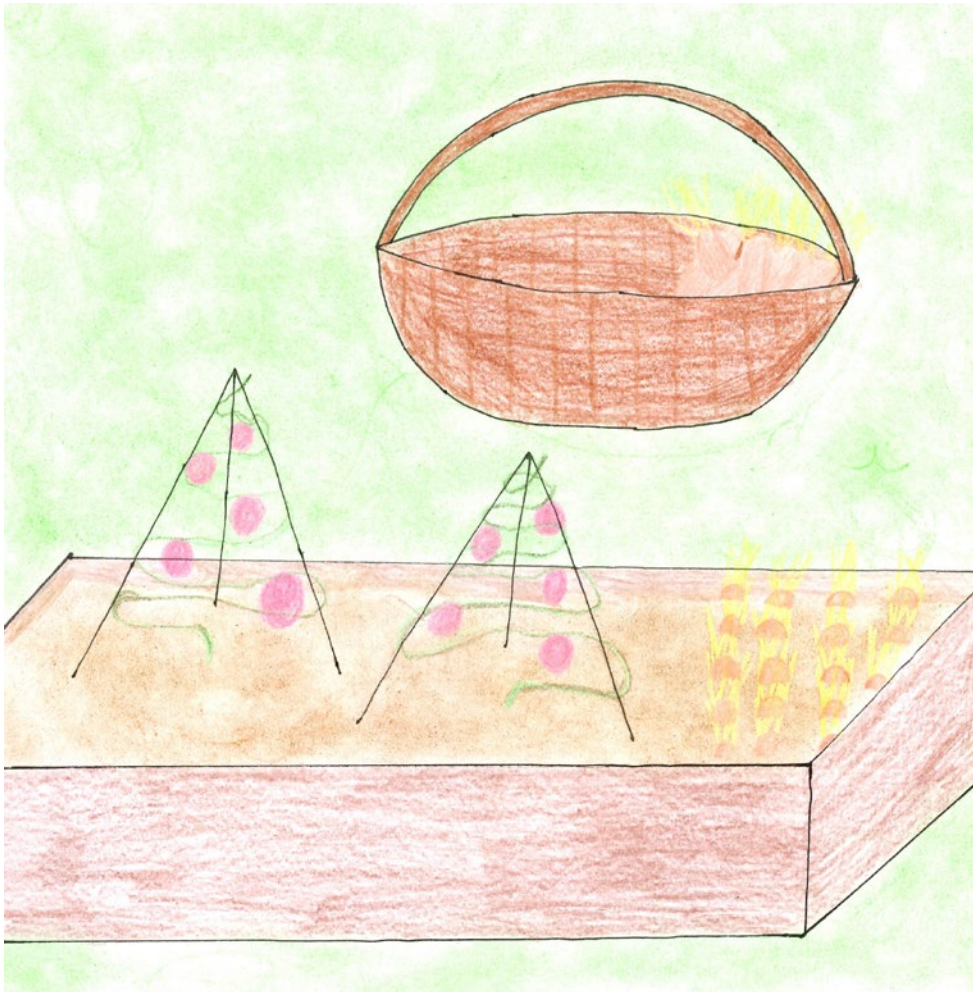
In her hand she held a small notebook and pen, on which she wrote out her weekly produce deliveries.

“Tomatoes, carrots and lettuce for Jack,” she muttered as she jotted it down.

Once a week, Ashlee would deliver her home-grown fruit and vegetables to the people of Narrabri. Sometimes she would even cook mouth-watering gourmet meals for them.

Ashlee stood and headed to her garden; Millie followed eagerly. She picked up her brown, woven basket and positioned herself next to the carrots.

One by one, she plucked the carrots from the rich, moist soil and carefully placed them in the basket. Soon Ashlee's basket was overflowing with fresh, healthy fruit and vegetables.

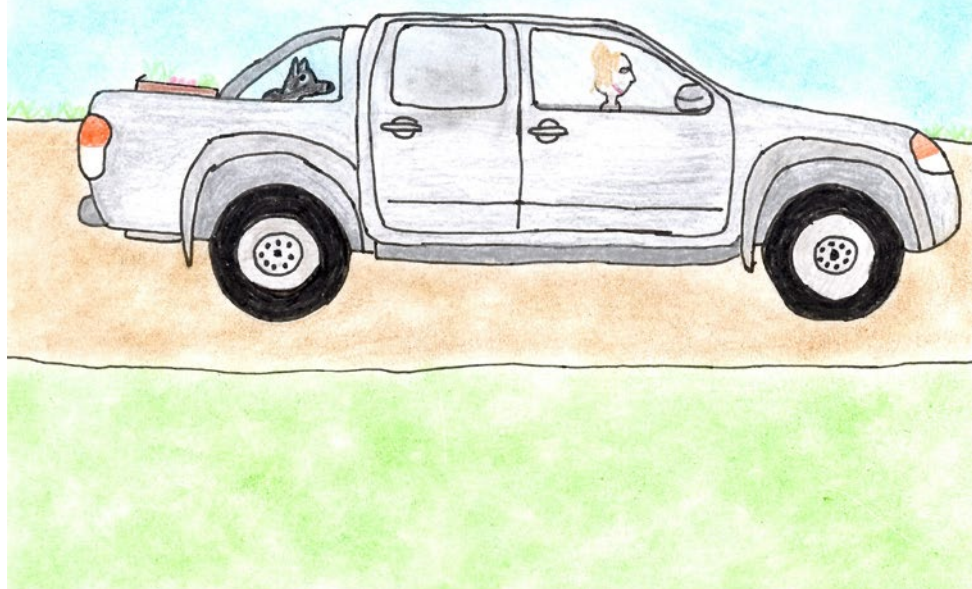


Ashlee walked back to the house with her basket in hand. She stopped at her oak front door and kicked off her mud-covered boots. Ashlee placed her woven basket on the white, granite benchtop in the kitchen. She turned on the tap and began to wash the fruit and vegetables getting them ready to be sold to her friends in town.



That afternoon, Ashlee loaded all of her produce into the back of her silver Ute.

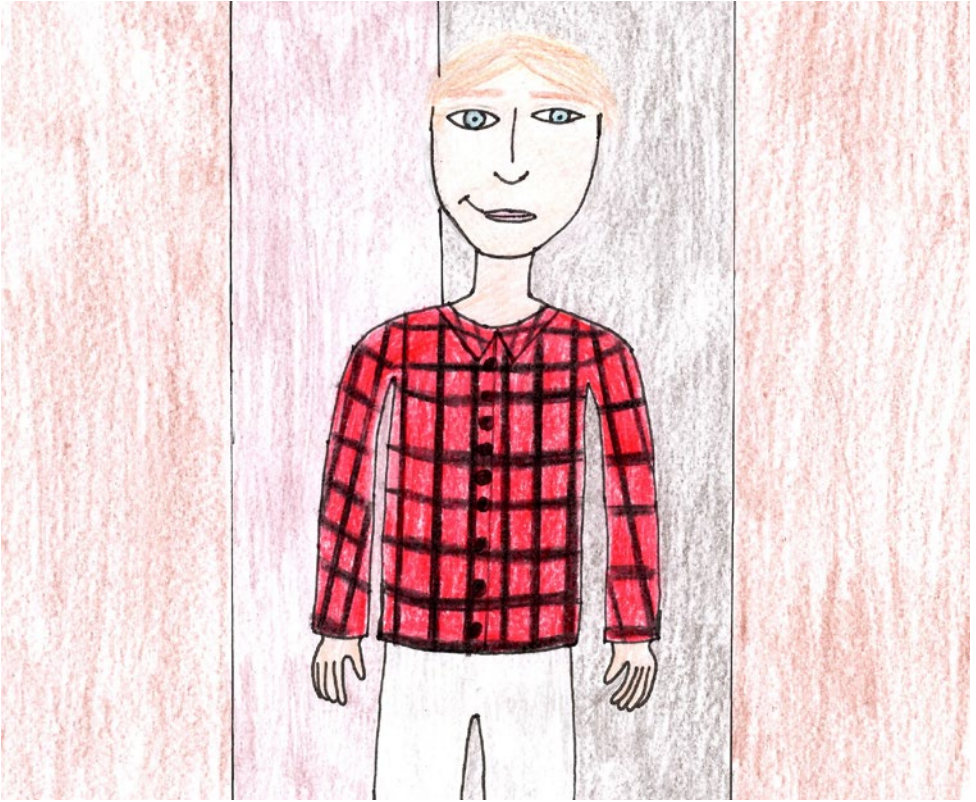
“Millie, get in the back!” exclaimed Ashlee. With that command, Millie bounded into the back of the Ute. Ashlee clambered in and started the strenuous journey to town.



Ashlee pulled up in front of a small, brown cottage. The brown paint was peeling off the rough, cracked walls of the cottage and the old, grey frames of the windows were lined with rust. The long grass tickled the walls of the house.

Ashlee hauled a cardboard box full to the brim with fresh fruit and vegetables out of the tray and trudged up to the front door.





Ding dong! A tall man with a short, stubby beard came to the door. He smiled showing all of his crooked, yellow teeth.

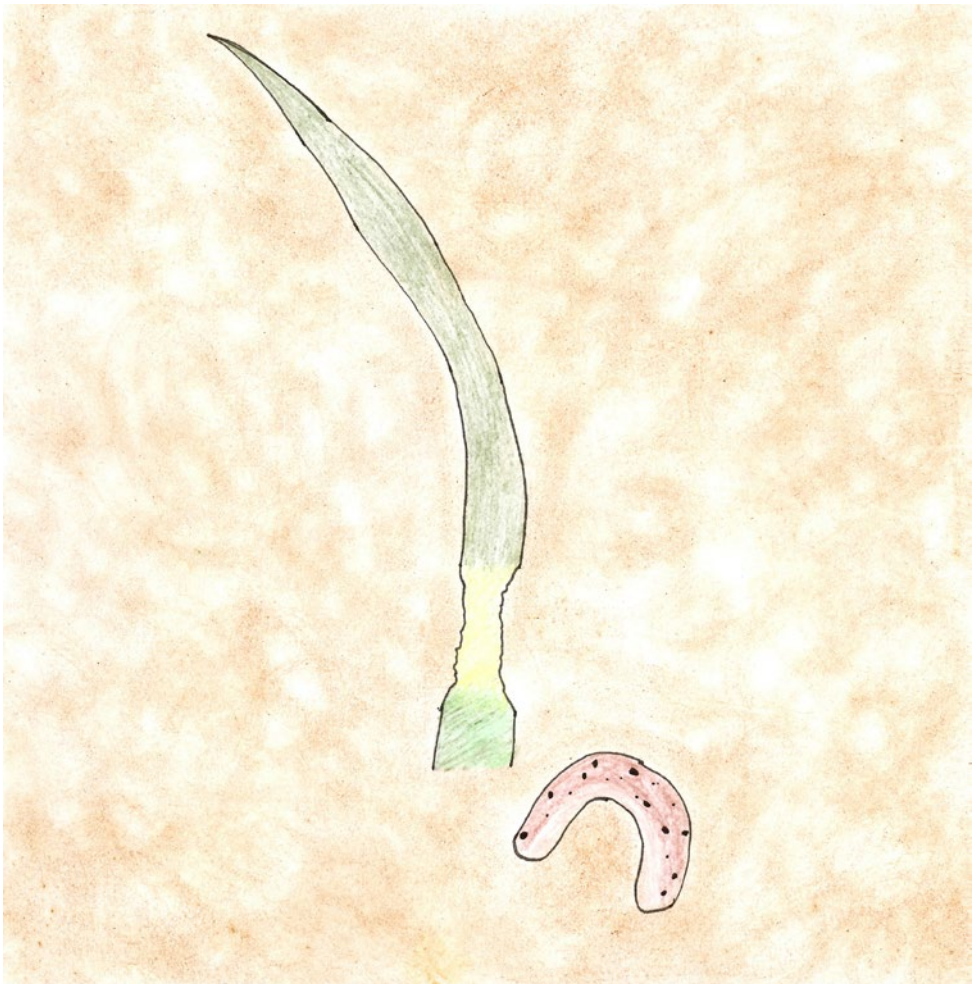
“Ah Ashlee. What a pleasant surprise. Are those for me?” asked Jack curiously.

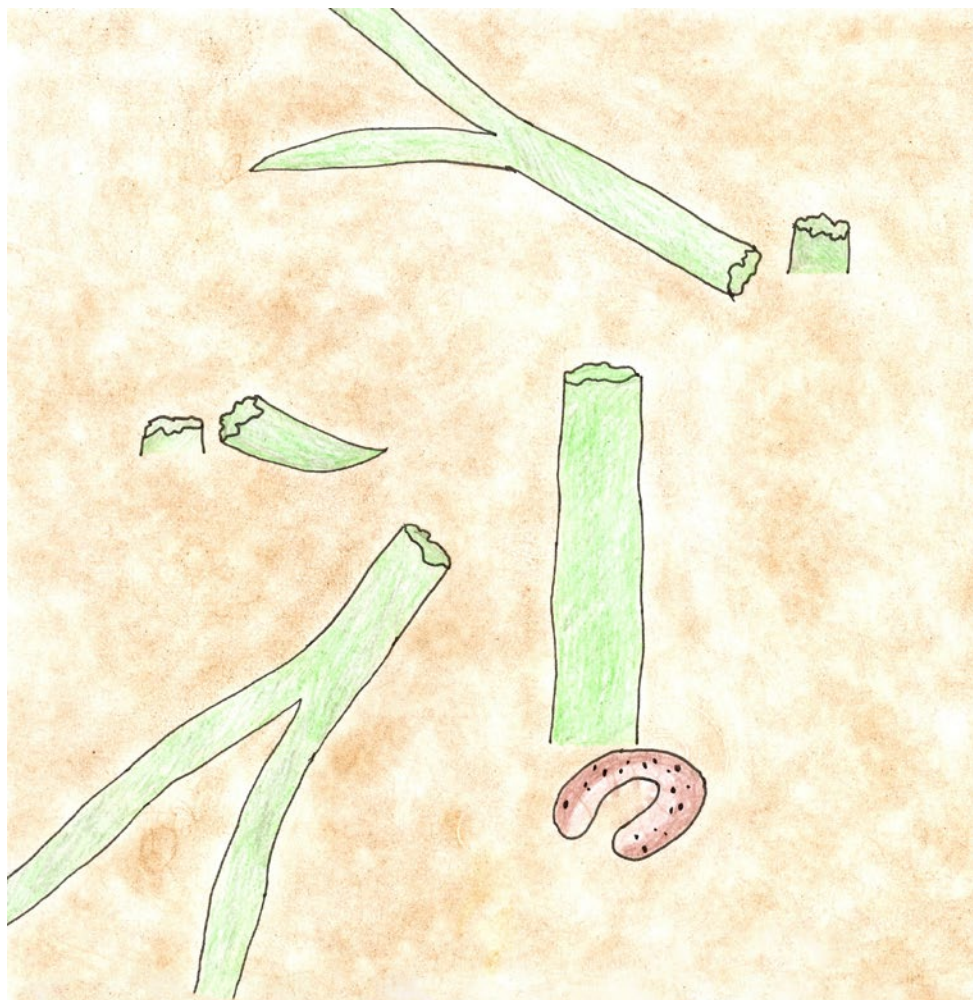
“They sure are,” replied Ashlee cheerfully. She handed him the box and in return he gave her a few well-worn notes of money.

Helping people like Jack receive fresh produce is why Ashlee started this business.

One brisk morning, while Ashlee was wandering about her garden, she noticed that some of her plants' stems had been munched on, causing them to wilt and die.

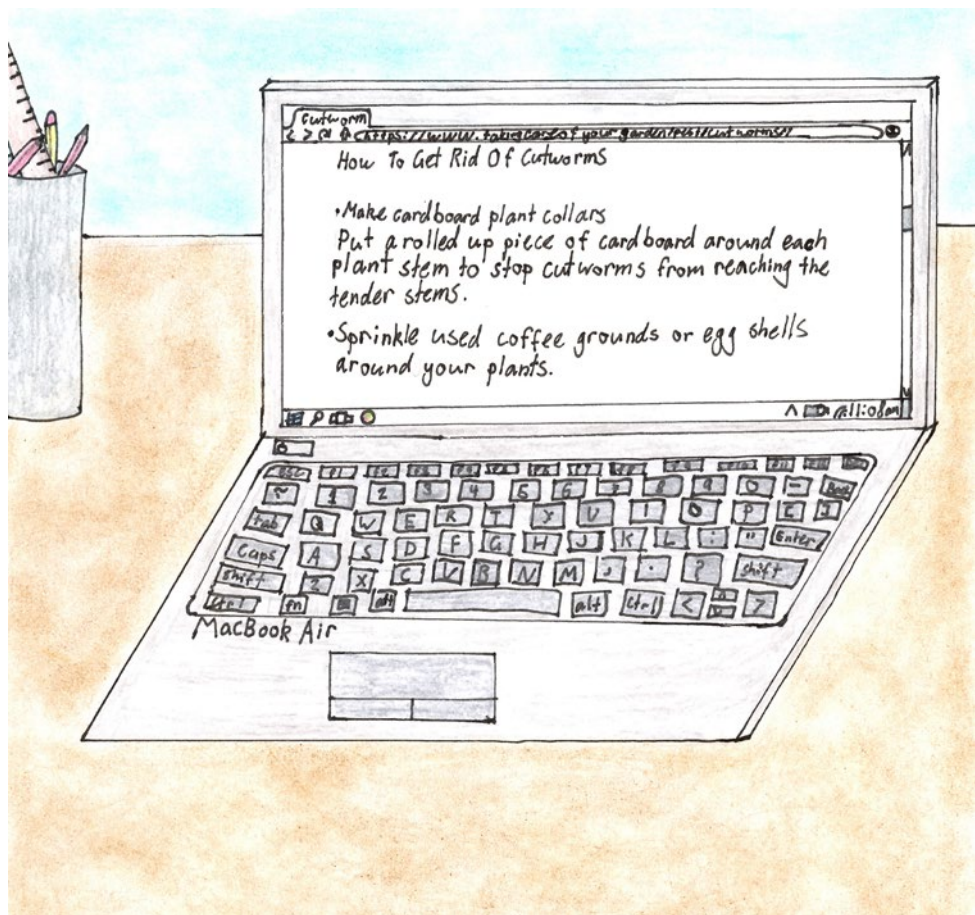
Upon further investigation, she found several plump grubs with black spots on their heads squirming around in the soil.





Ashlee took a photo and did a quick Google search to try and find out what on earth was destroying her innocent plants.

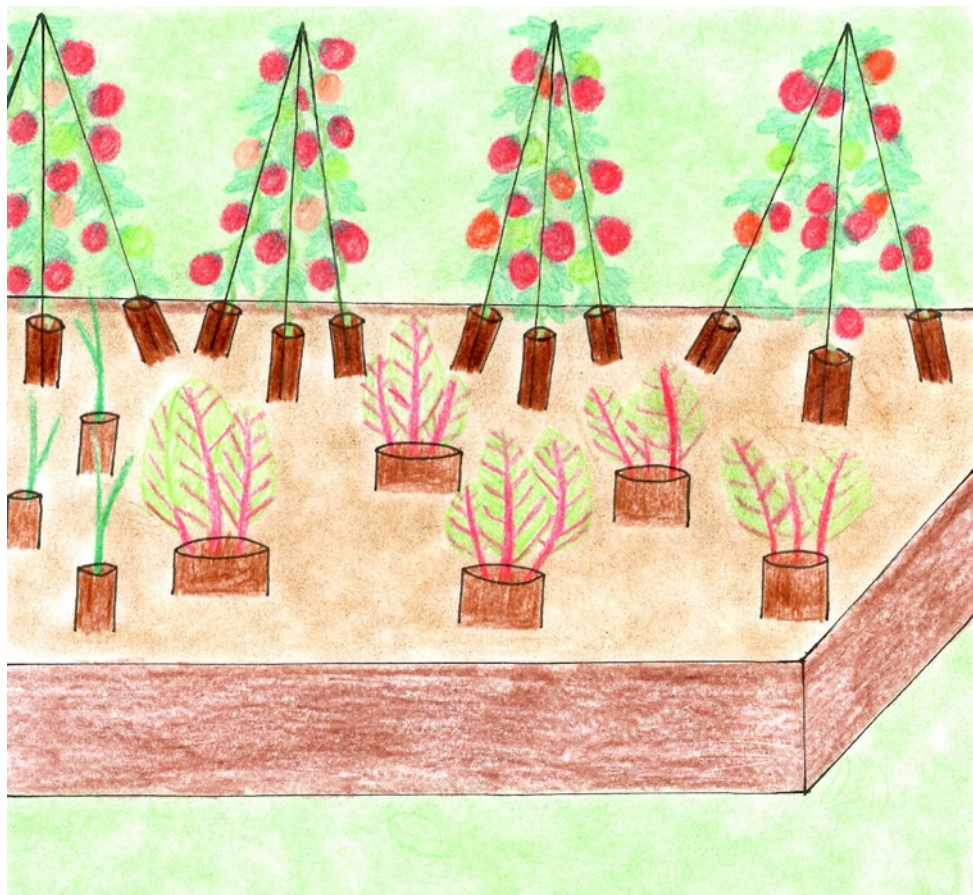
Later that day she came to a conclusion. Cutworms! That's what they were. These little critters lay their creamy-white eggs in the soil and when they hatch, they feed on the stems of plants.



Now that Ashlee knew what they were, she began to research how to eliminate them.

One website stated that putting cardboard collars around the plants would stop them from reaching the plants. Another claimed that sprinkling used coffee grounds or eggshells around the plants would deter them.

She decided to try both.

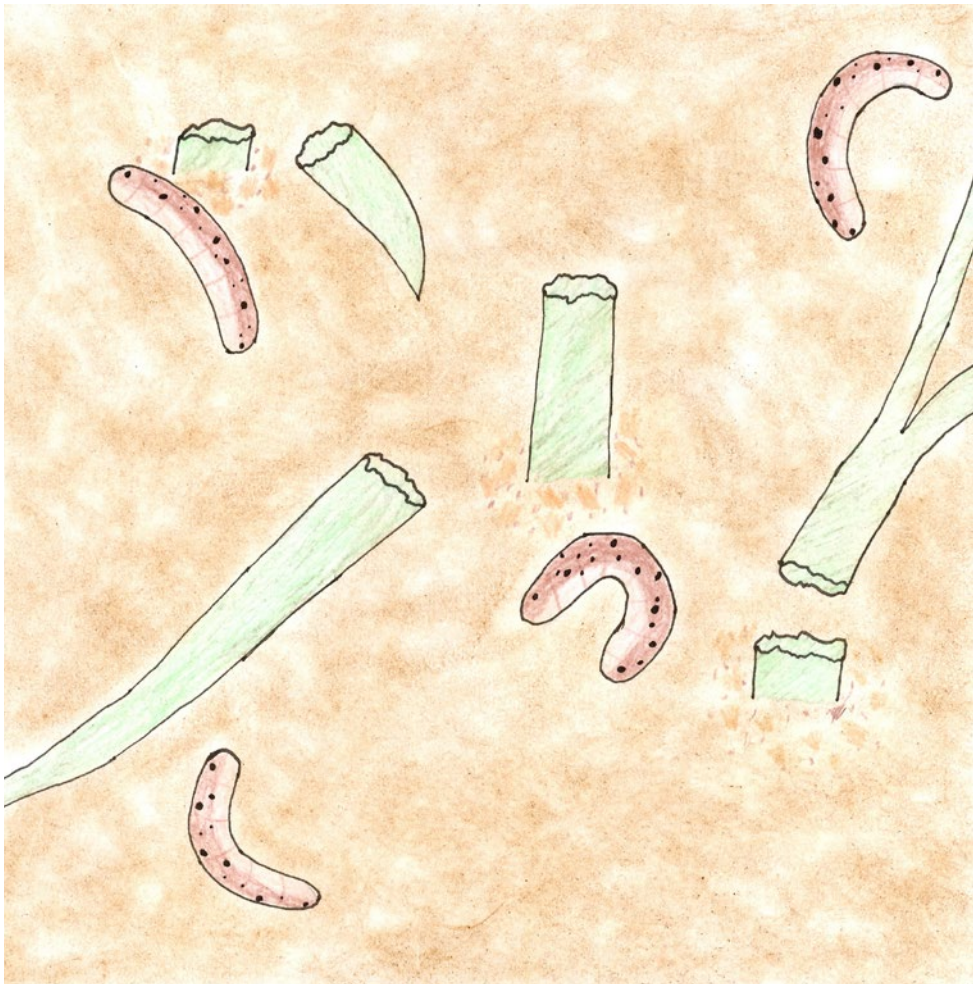


Over the next couple of days, Ashlee scavenged around for any scraps of cardboard she could find. Once she had enough, she began to craft as many collars as she could. Ashlee worked and worked, until her fingers hurt from holding onto the scissors.

When she was done, Ashlee quickly walked outside, eager to see if it would work. Ashlee positioned the collars around the plants. Millie gingerly inspected Ashlee's handy work; she was satisfied.

A few days later, Ashlee went out to see if her cardboard collars had done the trick. Unfortunately, they had not. Now there were more cutworms than ever.

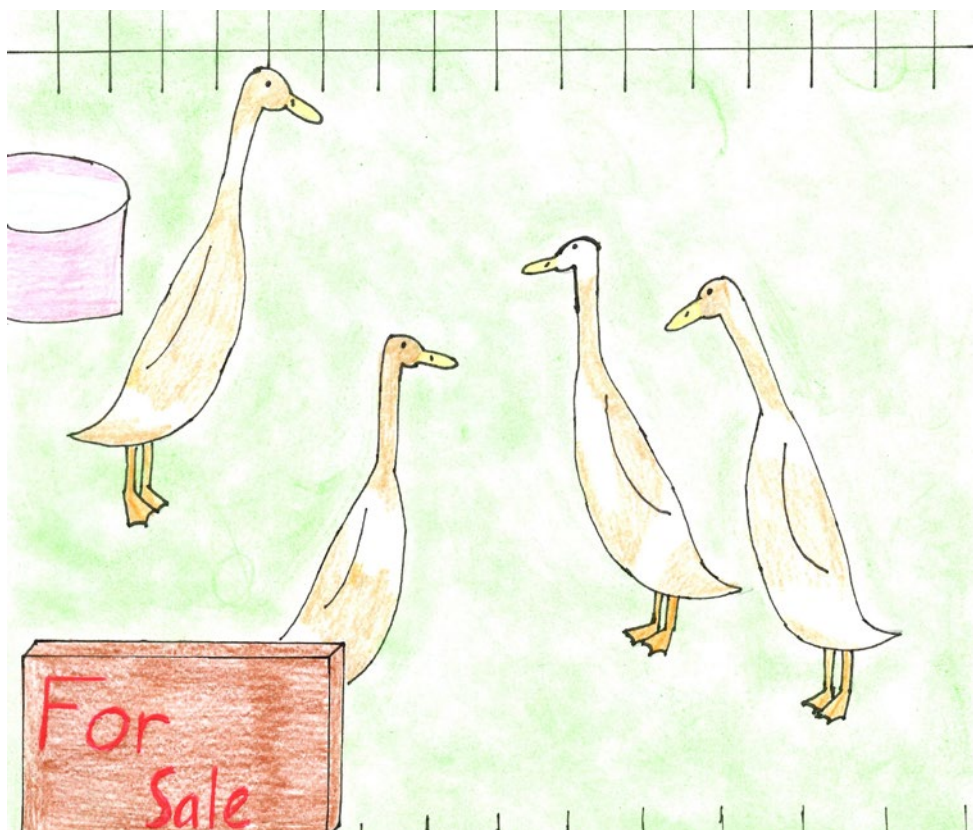
She tried sprinkling used coffee grounds and eggshells around her plants in the hope that it would work. Sadly, this didn't work either.

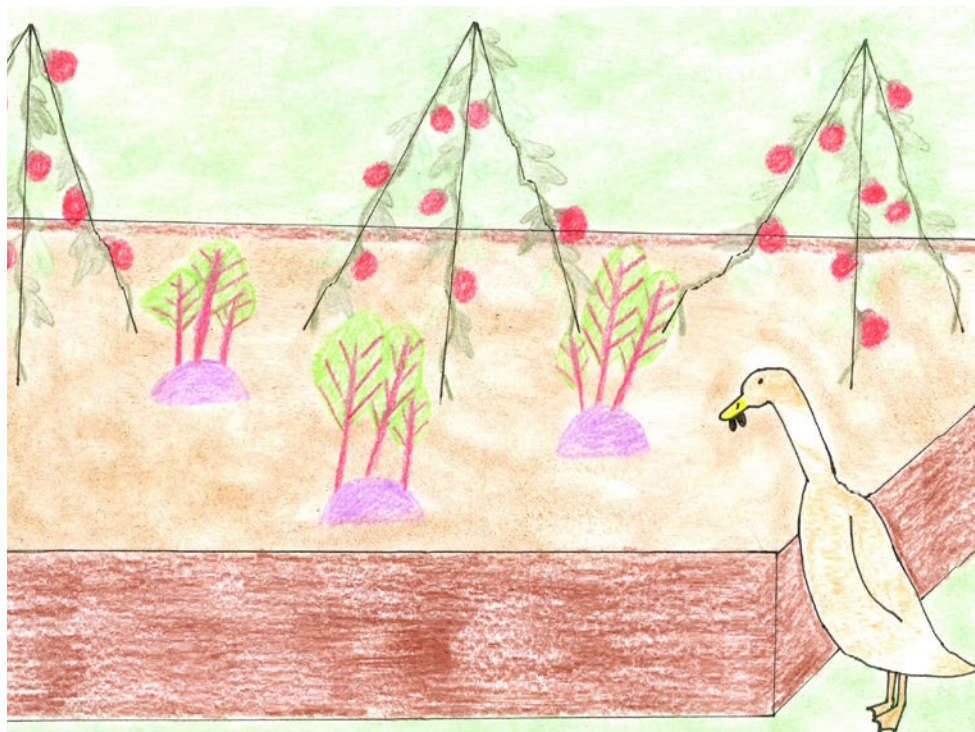


Ashlee didn't know what to do. The majority of her plants were dead, and those catastrophic caterpillars weren't going away anytime soon. She checked the website one more time.

There was one more suggestion, but she was sceptical. Ashlee rang up a good friend and asked if he had any ducks for sale at the moment. Fortunately, he did.

She bought four Indian Runner ducks and took them home to her suffering garden.

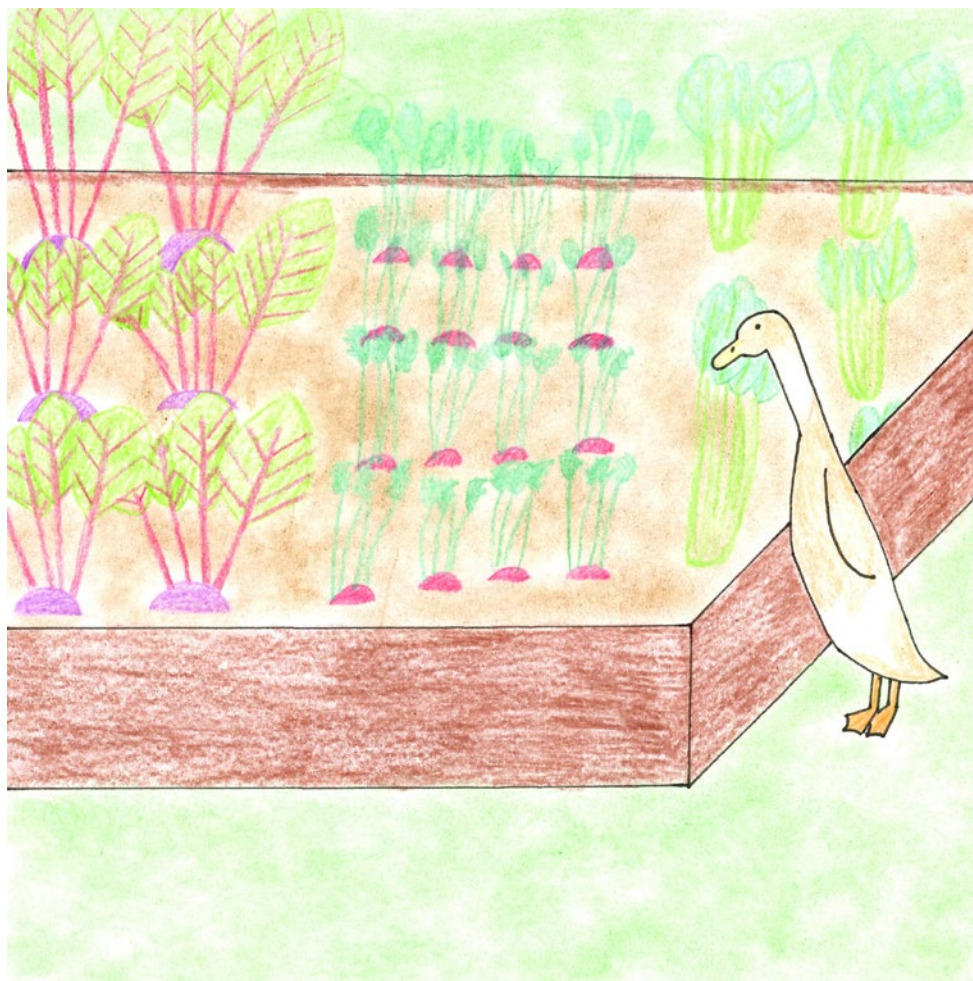




Ashlee squatted down at the edge of her garden and opened the small, metal cage door. The ducks exploded out of the cage.

They waddled around exploring their new home. Suddenly one of them stopped in its tracks. Something had caught its eye. The duck swiftly walked over to a small, wooden garden bed. He pecked at the moist soil and picked up a plump, black caterpillar.

Ashlee was overjoyed. The ducks had no interest in the plants whatsoever; they were only after the caterpillars.



Over the next few weeks, Ashlee continued to let her ducks roam her garden and gobble up those caterpillars. Soon her garden was once more thriving and full of lush, green and healthy plants, ready to harvest and share with the people of Narrabri.



Penelope Longstaff
Narrabri Public School, Year 6 2020

