

Why Teach Kids To Garden?

Gardening with children can be one of the most rewarding experiences for both the child and their parents or mentors. Children are natural gardeners - they are curious, learn by doing, and love to play in the dirt. Working together in the garden can provide hours of quality time each week and encourages a child's interest in the workings of nature and science, experiencing the cycles of life first hand. Giving a child her/his own space teaches responsibility and allows for creativity and a sense of pride in producing food or growing a bounty of wildflowers. As an added bonus, the whole family ends up with fresh food and a new appreciation of vegetables.



Tips for Gardening with Kids

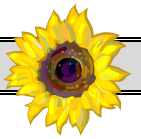
- Give them their own space - either raised beds, pots, or ground plots- make sure each child has their own space.
- Keep it small - a smaller space is more manageable and everything seems larger through a child's eyes. Start small and increase with age and interest.
- Placement in the best possible spot - near the action, in the best sun and (prepared) soil, will optimize success.
- Use serious tools and work gloves - cheap plastic tools break and frustrate the new gardener.
- Engage kids in the entire process from seed to table.



Edible Suggestions

- Broccoli - Try Minaret, it looks like tiny spiral towers and tastes delicious.
- Brussels Sprouts - Fun to harvest, easy to grow, try 'Valiant' for excellent flavor.
- Carrot - Thumbelina and Little Finger are cute, snacking varieties.
- Chard - Bright Lights and Rainbow will brighten up the vegetable garden.
- Corn - Try Bodacious, Precocious (early), Kandy Corn, Zea Mays (ornamental)
- Cucumber - Great for trellising and a crowd-pleaser.
- Dill - Tall and feathery, has great taste and smell.
- Fennel - Yummy leaves and seeds, attracts beneficial insects.
- Gourd - Try Swan, Caveman's Club, Autumn Wings for interesting shapes.
- Lettuce - Easy to grow nearly year round and best when cut fresh from the garden.
- Pineapple Sage- Smells sweet, attracts hummingbirds.
- Peas - Sugar Snap and Cascade are great for cooking and snacking.
- Potato - Blue and Cranberry Red varieties are delightful excuses for playing in the dirt.
- Pumpkin - Try smaller varieties like Baby Boo, Jack Be Little, and Fairy Tale.
- Squash - Flying Saucer, Starship, 8-Ball, and Sunburst all have great shapes.
- Strawberry - Alpine, Seascape, Hood are delicious and abundant producers.
- Sunflower - Plant edible seed varieties like Arikara.
- Tomato - Bite size Cherry, Yellow Pear, and Grape are sweet and popular with kids.

Flowering Annuals



- Calendula - Edible, sure bloomer.
- Marigold - Aromatic, easy to grow from seed.
- Pansy - Cute little flowers, easy to grow, lots of color variation.
- Salvia - Attracts butterflies & hummingbirds with tasty nectar and bright colors.
- Snapdragons - Fun dragon mouths that open and close.
- Sunflower - Huge and captivating, attracts birds, has edible seeds, and easy to grow. Try: Teddy Bear, Giant Sungold, Big Smile.
- Strawflower (*Helichrysum bracteatum*) - Fun shapes and great as a dried flower.
- Sweet Peas- Smell sweet and easy to grow.
- Zinnia - Wonderfully bright array of colors.



Flowering Perennials

- Bee Balm (*Monarda*) - Bright flowers attract hummingbirds/butterflies.
- Chocolate Cosmos (*Cosmos atrosanguineus*)- velvety black-red with chocolate smell.
- Coreopsis - Feathery foliage and continuous golden flowers.
- Echinacea - Has an intriguing texture to its center, blooms summer till fall.
- Gaillardia - Loads of daisy-like flowers in warm colors all summer long.
- Daisy (*Leucanthemum*) - A classic in the garden.
- Delphinium - Intense shades of blue, tall and whimsical.
- Lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantina*) - Very soft and true to its name.
- Lavender (*Lavendula*) - Lovely, calming scent, attracts wildlife, drought tolerant.
- Poppies - Provides great color, easy to grow, Icelandic Mix & Oriental varieties.
- Red Hot Pokers (*Kniphofia*) - Huge colorful flower stalks, drought resistant.

Structures



Teepees - These are easy to make by lashing 3-5 poles or sticks together, stringing wire or twine around for beans, morning glory, gourds, or cucumber to grow upon. Make them tall enough for a child to climb inside.

Sunflower or Corn House - Can be created by strategically planting seeds 5 rows thick to form walls, use beans in their place to make windows.

Topiary animals - Create different animals and objects out of chicken wire, then grow ivy vines or morning glory over the wire.



Helpful websites:

www.kidsgardening.com

www.bbc.co.uk/gardening

Books:

Children's Gardens: A Field Guide for Teachers, Parents, and Volunteers by Elizabeth Bremner & John Pusey.

Dig, Plant, Grow: A Kid's Guide to Gardening
By Felder Rushing

Great Gardens for Kids
by Clare Matthews

Roots, Shoots, Buckets, and Boots: Gardening Together with Children by Sharon Lovejoy

Local Resources

Growing Gardens-Community outreach through school gardens and the Boys & Girls Club, volunteer/community involvement opportunities.
Contact: Caitlin 503-284-8420
email-Caitlin@growing-gardens.org

Old McDonald's Farm-Offers classes, summer & special needs programs & camps, day visits, "Farmer For a Day" sleep-overs, & seasonal activities.
Contact: 503-695-3316
www.oldmcdonaldsfarm.org

Zenger Farm-Offers after school classes, summer camp, and day activities.
Contact: 503-282-4245, Education Coordinator
www.zengerfarm.org

Portland Community Gardens/Friends of Portland Community Gardens - After school participation in 3 community gardens and summer camp programs.
Contact: 503-823-1612, 503-823-1617
email- comgardens@ci.portland.or.us

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Great Plants And Ideas For a Child's Garden



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