

## 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.
- Choose interesting (smell, touch, taste) and colorful plants that are easy to grow.

## Edible Suggestions

Beans - Scarlet Runner & Painted Lady have colorful seeds & flowers that hummingbirds love.

Beet - The striped varieties are favorites.

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.

Eggplant - Bambino is a cute variety to try.

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.

Mint - Chocolate, Apple, Orange, Pineapple, and Peppermint have wonderful scent and taste.

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.

Radish - Easter Egg and Breakfast are tasty varieties and rewarding producers.

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, nice aroma.

Bunny Tails (*Lagrus ovatus*) - grass with fluffy poofs on the ends.

Love in a Mist (*Nigella*) - Seed pods are fun to pop.

Morning Glory & Sweet Potato Vine (*Ipomoea*) - fast growing, showy flowering vines.

Marigold - Aromatic, easy to grow from seed.

Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum*) - Rambling mass of bright, edible flowers.

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, and is a medicinal herb.

Gaillardia - Loads of daisy-like flowers in warm colors all summer long.



## Perennials Cont'd...

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.

Sempervirens - Weird looking succulents, drought tolerant, try Hens & Chicks or Cobweb Houseleek.

## 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](http://www.kidsgardening.com)

[www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/firstgarden/](http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/firstgarden/)

[www.bbc.co.uk/gardening](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.oldmcdonaldsfarm.org)

Zenger Farm-Offers after school classes, summer camp, and day activities.  
Contact: 503-2824245, Education Coordinator  
[www.zengerfarm.org](http://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](mailto:comgardens@ci.portland.or.us)

\*Check out our additional pamphlets for growing tips on vegetables, annuals, perennials, and other specifics.

Compiled By Alison McKenzie

Gardening with Kids Month

Great Plants  
And Ideas  
For a Child's  
Garden



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