

🌱 Gardening with Children 🌱

Did you know that gardening with children has a positive effect on their minds, bodies, and souls?

MIND

Studies have shown that children who garden achieved higher grades in math and science than children who don't. Gardening with children introduces them to scientific concepts and can cause them to ask questions such as "Why do plants need sun? How much does a plant drink? and "What makes leaves green?" Also, measuring the weekly growth of a plant assists in a child's math learning.

Gardening teaches children planning and organizing skills. Some plants grow better at certain times of the year. Other plants grow better when they're planted next to another specific plant. Some plants grow nicely in rows while others, like wildflowers, can be thrown on the ground. Deciding who will care for the plants once they are planted can be another opportunity to plan together.

Gardening is an excellent opportunity to practice literacy skills by learning the different names of plants and reading their growth requirements from seed or plant packages.

BODY

Children LOVE to get their hands dirty. This can cause uneasiness and even panic for some parents. However, consider the "hygiene hypothesis" theory. This theory states that a lack of childhood exposure to germs actually increases a child's susceptibility to diseases, such as asthma, allergies and autoimmune conditions by suppressing the development of the immune system.

Gardening is a great way to get children active! Moving soil, carrying a heavy watering can, digging in the dirt and pushing a wheelbarrow promotes gross motor skills and improves overall strength in the body. These activities, which are also known as "heavy work", have been shown to help children remain focused and calm. Being outdoors in the fresh air, engaging all of the senses and moving around is a great way to connect with the body while gardening.

Have a choosy eater? Try growing a fruit or vegetable from a seed! They will be proud to have grown a tomato or strawberry and they just might be curious enough to taste test the fruits of their labour. Encourage children to sample the fruit or vegetable straight off the vine (washed of course) or ask them to help you prepare it in the kitchen.

SOUL

Gardening provides an opportunity creating meaningful connection and memories. It gives parents an opportunity to learn more about their children such as how they think, what they like and dislike and how capable they are. It allows for team building and promotes communication skills amongst family members.



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SOUL cont.

Planning a garden, planting the seeds and watching them grow gives children a sense of purpose and responsibility. Ensuring plants get enough fertilizer, water and sun fosters mindfulness. Gardening teaches children patience. It can take weeks for a planted seed to show growth. Concepts learned while gardening such as composting and gathering rain water instills a deep respect and responsibility for taking care of the planet. Additionally, once children see how much time and effort goes in to gardening and harvesting produce they will likely become more empathetic towards those who help put food on the table. Use this time to talk about the importance of supporting local farmers.

15 Plants to Avoid in a Children's Garden

1. Stinging Nettle
2. Prickly Pear and other cactus (*avoid with younger children*)
3. Thistle
4. Roses
5. Barberry
6. Raspberries
7. Holly
8. Pokeweed
9. Lily-of-the-valley
10. Daffodil
11. Golden chain tree
12. Buckeye
13. Dieffenbachia
14. Latana
15. Hot peppers

Safety First!

When gardening outside with children, it's important to remember some basic safety guidelines. Ensure that you and your children are wearing sunscreen and sun hats along with proper footwear to protect their feet from cuts and stings. Wash hands BEFORE and AFTER gardening. Instruct children on the safe use and handling of garden tools and equipment and SUPERVISE! Be aware of any allergies. Finally, always wash all fresh produce once picked from the garden.

HOW TO GET STARTED / GOOD PLANTS TO GROW WITH CHILDREN

Pizza Garden

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/special/children/growing-pizza-garden.htm>

Dinosaur Garden

<https://meganzeni.com/dinosaur-garden/>

Fairy Garden

<https://rhythmsofplay.com/start-your-own-fairy-garden/>

Other themed gardens can be found here:

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/special/children/gardening-with-kids-using-themes.htm>



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REFERENCES

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