

Gardening with children

YOU'RE NEVER TOO YOUNG TO START GARDENING. Through gardening, children learn about nature and their role in it. Gardening helps them realize how they fit in the world and that carrots and potatoes don't originate in a store. Another big lesson, especially if rain washes away seedlings, or birds and other critters upend tender shoots, is that nature is not totally under human control. Gardening also teaches patience. It takes time for sprouts to break through the ground and children have to learn to wait -- a valuable lesson in this age of instant gratification.

In addition, gardening reaches across several disciplines, including science and math, making activities in the garden a perfect way to teach your child (or grandchild) a variety of skills...

- ✍ Hone math skills by calculating the number of rows times the number of plants.
- ✍ Or keep a running total of how much money you've invested in seeds, plants, fertilizer and so on..
- ✍ Read to older children about germination, pollination and photosynthesis.
- ✍ Make a calendar and record your garden's progress, and to chart watering and weeding responsibilities.
- ✍ For younger kids, explore the shape and colour of different leaves and flowers, make leaf prints, and look for bugs.

Above all, gardening teaches children one of life's biggest lessons: to be responsible. They soon learn that forgetting to water plants and pull weeds has consequences. Neglected plants won't do very well, yet a well-tended garden can be a source of pride for children of all ages.