

Gardening with Children

Children enjoy few things more than digging in the dirt and making mud pies. Looking for worms and bugs fascinates them, and they love to water the garden.

Children also enjoy planting seeds, watching them grow and harvesting what they have grown. By cultivating their curiosity about these things, you can help them develop a love of nature and gardening.

Plotting It Out

It is important to include the child when deciding where to put the garden. When a place is chosen, remember to keep it small. Measuring out a “yard stick” garden keeps the size manageable for most children.

This is a good time to talk about what is required for a successful garden. A healthy garden begins with good soil. Explain that plants, just like people, need to eat and drink. Make sure the spot gets enough sun and has a readily available source of water.

Choosing What to Grow

Vegetables are a good choice for children. They germinate quickly and can be eaten when mature. Popular choices are radishes, zucchini, pumpkins, carrots, lettuce, peas, broccoli and potatoes. Children may even be encouraged to eat vegetables that they have grown and would otherwise avoid.

If you have enough room in the garden, gourds are a good choice. After harvesting,

they can be decorated and used as birdhouse or autumn table decorations.

Planting the Garden

Prepare the soil by turning it all over. Children should have their own tools for this. Measuring cups for scoops and old, heavy kitchen spoons for digging work well. After soil has been turned, plant the seeds. Children love to choose the seed packets and starter plants for their garden and should be allowed to do the planting themselves.

Tending to Your Garden

Watering and weeding the garden may not hold as much interest for children as the planning and planting did. Garden tasks will be easier to remember if you put a garden calendar in your child’s room or on the refrigerator. That way he or she can take charge of completing the tasks and crossing off the days when each task has been completed.

Reaping the Rewards

More than just plants grow out of helping a child tend to a garden. Gardening gives children a sense of responsibility and confidence and enables them to learn about the environment and about the relationship between plants and people. Gardening is a great way to spend time together as a family.

Taylor Seymour, Class of 2004

Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery

Niagara-on-the-Lake Campus, 135 Taylor Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0
phone: (905) 641-2252, ext. 4082; fax: (905) 988-4307 e-mail: mnewell@niagaracollege.ca
Website: <http://greenhousenursery.niagaracollege.ca>