

Go Green: Gardening with Kids

April is the perfect time to begin gardening indoors or to start planning for a garden outdoors. Here are some simple steps to focus your efforts and get the kids onboard.

Step 1: Get them interested. The surest way to gain the interest of children and teens is to involve them in the process. Give the garden a **theme or focus**, such as a **Butterfly Garden** or a **Bizza Garden**, gets the kids excited about the fruits of their labor.



Step 2: Make a plan. From the start, plan how your garden will get the four essentials: food, water, shelter, and a designated location. Ask your children **“What do you think we should plant in our garden?”** Children can help decide what to plant. Identify the last spring frost date and the indoor and outdoor germination periods. Begin gathering supplies. Indoor containers (used and washed milk containers) and an appropriate light source (south-facing window) are garden necessities. Once supplies are gathered, the dirty (and fun!) work begins.

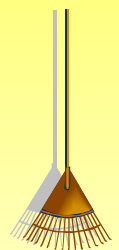
Step 3: Start the garden! Want to begin planting indoors? Determine which varieties can withstand a frost, such as broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage, versus those that can't, such as tomatoes, peppers, and melons. Also, some crops don't transplant well, such as carrots, beets, corn, beans, peas, squash, and cucumbers so don't start them inside. **Don't forget to have fun!** Set up stations to simplify the potting process. Help your children learn by exploring which plants are **“friends”** and which don't get along in a garden.

Step 4: Share the wealth (and the work).

Building a garden with your children teaches them self-sufficiency. It also offers the chance to explore creative, earth-friendly practices with a low impact on the environment. Planting cover crops, like rye grass, or use of fabric covers can serve as natural barriers to insects. Starting and maintaining a garden allows children to **see and appreciate where their food comes from.**

Step 5: Reap the benefits. Harvesting is a time for celebration! Explore **healthy recipes** with your children, while using the products of your garden. Try treating the garden like a grocery store where the kids can do the daily or nightly shopping.

Step 6: Incorporate the idea of year-round investment. Consider teaching kids about composting, canning, drying or freezing foods. Gardening indoors or in containers helps illustrate the ongoing process and benefits of **growing your own foods..**



For more information, explore the website

www.kidsgardening.com

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