



Gardening with Kids

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It is not always easy preparing healthy meals that your entire family will eat without complaining. If you have picky eaters, it makes that job even more difficult. One tool to help children establish life-long healthy habits is growing a garden.

Nutrition: There have been many studies that show children who help garden are more likely to consume what they planted. This equates to more fruits and vegetables! They are also more likely to help choose more fresh produce at the grocery store. This makes it a little easier to prepare meals if you can find a couple of vegetables to offer that they will eat. So increased nutritional status is a plus.

Physical Activity: Another positive that comes from gardening with your children is the benefits that come with physical activity. Teaching them to work the soil, and plant, weed and water are all great things. They also require movement, and utilizing muscles you may not use all the time. Bending, squatting, hoeing—these all use large muscle groups and are great for anyone! Hauling soil, harvesting tomatoes and picking beans—these are also life skills that will stay with your children the rest of their lives. Teaching them where their food comes from and the work that is put into growing it is important. They will appreciate their food a little more. At the least, they won't answer "the grocery store" when asked where their food comes from!



Family Time: Finally—spending time with your children outside in the sun away from video games and the television is fun. You are building memories. You are working together to provide food for your family, while playing with dirt and annoying caterpillars. Can it be any better than that?

If you don't have a big spot for a small garden — plant a tomato plant in a pot. You will get the same outcomes!

Sources:

1. Growing and Cooking Fruits and Vegetables at Childcare Centers, North Carolina State Extension: <https://bit.ly/3aRWRuH>
2. Hughes, L., DiClaudio, D., Savoca, L. (August, 2013). Learning Through the Garden, Rutgers Cooperative Extension: <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1211>



Family Fun on the Run is a monthly newsletter designed to help families add physical activity to their already hectic schedules.

For more information check out Family Fun on the Run:

<http://go.unl.edu/xxqx>

Need more info?

Here are a few helpful gardening resources:

- This site has lots of great ideas and activities for gardening with children: <http://kidsgardening.org>.
- Your local Extension office also has many resources for beginning and experienced gardeners!

This article has been peer-reviewed.