

Gardening with children

Gardening is a great way to share time with children through active play. Children learn responsibility, self-confidence, creativity, co-operation, reasoning and discovery.

Gardening can be used to teach maths, science and art as well as helping children to value food and the process of growing it yourself.

No garden, No problem

You can grow plants in pots, hanging baskets or even use old boots or tea pots. Baths, crates or old tyres can be used to make garden beds. If you don't have much space, you can grow tomato plants in yoghurt pots or sprouts in hollowed out potatoes to make 'potato heads' or in egg cartons with damp cotton wool.



How to make it work

- Keep it fun
- Give them their own space in the garden
- Allow children to explore and be their own boss
- Start with short bursts of activity
- Children love playing in dirt, digging and exploring the garden

Get them involved

Growing and picking vegetables, herbs and fruits helps children to get excited about trying new foods, flavours and eating more fruits and vegetables.

Talk to them about the idea of 'seed to table'. A great example is a **Pizza plot** where they can grow basil, tomatoes and garlic together and use them to make their own pizza.

Keep a diary or scrap book – you can include photos or drawings.

Activities

There are so many ways that children can share in the gardening experience:

- Watering
- Digging
- Potting
- Planting
- Weeding
- Composting
- Picking
- Cooking

Get creative

- Grow your own tepee by planting beans or peas around a simple stick or wire structure tied up with string
- Plant some edible flowers to add exciting colour to a salad or make pretty crowns with
- Get your children to help make signs and plant-labels or painted rocks to decorate the garden
- Make a scarecrow from old clothes stuffed with straw or material and tied to a wooden frame

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Make a sensory garden

Children of all ages can enjoy using all their senses in the garden. Here are some ideas to help them – many of them are edible so you can continue the sensory journey in the kitchen!

- **Touch** soft woolly lambs ears, smooth or spiky succulents like aloe vera, bristly banksias
- **Taste** basil, oregano, strawberries, peas, rosemary, carrots, cherry tomatoes
- **Smell** lemon balm, native mint bush, lavender, jasmine, sweet peas, rose geranium
- **See** brightly coloured rainbow chard, sunflowers or marigolds
- **Hear** sweet corn, bamboo or other grasses that rattle in the wind. A happy garden attracts bees and songbirds too.



Safety

- Dress to protect from the sun
- Know your limits in the heat
- Encourage observation of creatures – talk about what is not safe to touch
- Keep an eye on young children
- Take care when using sharp tools
- Fence your garden well so that children can't easily wander off

Top 10 crops for children

Here are some plants that are easy and quick to grow and fun to harvest and cook.

1. **Sunflower** brings height and colour to the garden. Plant the edible seed version for a roasted seed snack.
2. **Lettuce mix** these grow quickly and in lots of colours and shapes. A great way to get children eating salad.
3. **Radishes** write your child's name in the soil and sow the seeds into the markings. Three to four days later their name will sprout from the ground.
4. **Snow peas** edible pods can be enjoyed straight from the plant.
5. **Cherry tomatoes** colourful, fun and tasty. Can be grown in pots if you don't have much space.
6. **Nasturtiums** pest resistant and colourful – you can use the flowers and leaves in a salad.
7. **Carrots** can be sown directly into the soil. Always taste better home grown!
8. **Potatoes** a 'never fail' crop. Make a game of throwing seed potatoes into the trenches that you have dug.
9. **Pumpkins** like sunflowers you can eat the seeds and the flesh is great for pies, roasting or soups.
10. **Sprouting seeds** a mini crop for the window sill. Bean sprouts, wheatgrass and alfalfa are all quick sprouters.

Where to go for more information and resources

Clarence City council - How does your garden grow booklet

www.ccc.tas.gov.au

Sustainable Gardening Australia

www.sgaonline.org.au