FN1372 (Reviewed July 2021)

Gardening With Children

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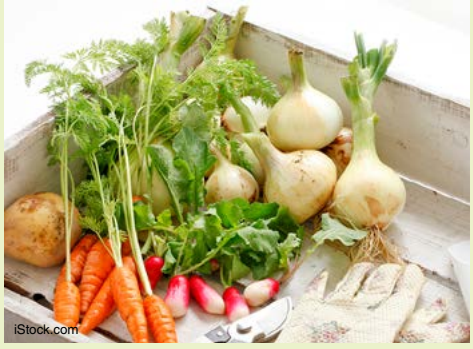
How do children benefit from gardening?

- Caring
- Growing
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Exploration
- Relationships
- Cooperation

Get your child interested by helping you design the garden, and plant, water and harvest the fruits of their labor. Children enjoy opportunities to learn through hands-on activities and stories.

Plants That Grow Well in North Dakota

Beets
Carrots
Cucumbers
Green beans
Lettuce
Onions
Potatoes
Pumpkin
Rhubarb
Spinach
Squash
Strawberries
Sugar snap peas
Tomatoes
Zucchini



Basic Garden Preparation Steps

1. Test soil fertility (contact county Extension office for information). Till soil if needed.
2. Select seeds or transplants. Some plants are annuals, biennials or perennials. Knowing what season they are grown and harvested in affects the short- and long-term plan for the garden.
3. Determine the planting layout in the garden. Different layouts are suitable for different plants. Some examples are: furrow, square foot or hill planting. Also, some plants require trellises or cages to support growth.

When to Plant

Most plants are best planted in May.

- The first 2½ weeks in May are best for leafy greens (such as lettuce, chard, spinach) and beets, carrots and potatoes.
- The last weeks in May are best for beans, squash, pumpkins, cucumbers and tomatoes.
- Consult the seed packet, or a garden center or plant nursery for additional planting information on specific plants.

Tools to Get Children Started

- Child-sized gloves
- Child-sized trowel
- Child-sized rake
- Child-sized watering can
- Soil and fertilizer as needed
- Plants or seeds
- Pots (optional)
- Long-sleeved shirt, pants and closed-toe shoes

Consider What Works for Your Family

Community Garden – If you don't have a personal garden area on your property, you may be able to enjoy a garden plot in a community garden.

Containers – Using containers or pots may be a good option if you have limited space or access to community gardens.

Compost – If you have a garden on your property, building and maintaining a compost pile or box is a great way to use organic materials to enrich your plant soil. Compost requires soil and raw organic matter, such as leaves, grass clippings, and vegetable and fruit peelings.

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What to do with all the fruits and vegetables you grow

Garden Chili

½ pound lean hamburger
1 c. chopped onion
½ c. potatoes, cut into small cubes
1 15-ounce can dark kidney beans
1½ c. diced tomatoes, blanch to remove skins
15-ounce can or about 2 c. tomato sauce
½ c. chopped green peppers
1 c. of water
1 Tbsp. chili powder
1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
½ tsp. cumin, ground
½ tsp. black pepper

Brown hamburger and onion in saucepan over medium heat. Blanch fresh tomatoes by removing stems and scoring bottom of tomato; boil one minute, immediately place in cold water, remove skins. Add remaining ingredients, bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes.

Makes eight servings. Each serving has 170 calories, 22 grams (g) carbohydrate, 3 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 14 g protein, 6 g fiber and 460 milligrams sodium.

Children enjoy eating their freshly grown fruit and vegetables. All garden produce should be washed with plenty of cold water before you eat it. You can store washed and drained produce in airtight containers in the refrigerator to keep them fresh and ready to eat for healthful snacks.

Tomatoes, onions, potatoes and winter squash should not be stored in the refrigerator; instead they should be stored in a cool, dark place.

Methods of Preserving Your Produce

Can fruits and vegetables in sterilized jars with proper canning equipment, using current guidelines. Canned produce should be used within one year and stored in a dark, dry place between 50 and 70 F for best quality.

Dehydrate fruits and vegetables in a dehydrator and store them in a cool, dark, dry place. Fruit can be stored for about six months at 80 F or one year at 60 F.

Freeze fruits and vegetables as soon as possible after harvesting them. Blanch vegetables (boil vegetables, followed immediately by cooling them in ice water) before freezing for best quality. Boiling time varies by vegetable type. Produce freezer life varies. Produce can last eight to 12 months at 0 F.

Additional Information

A variety of detailed information on preparation, planting, maintaining and harvesting your garden, along with preserving and storing produce, can be found at your **local NDSU Extension office** or by visiting www.ndsu.edu/extension.

Resources for Gardening With Children

- Food Preservation (NDSU Extension): **www.ag.ndsu.edu/food/food-preservation** Includes information about freezing, canning, drying and fermenting food
- Horticulture (NDSU Extension): **www.ag.ndsu.edu/horticulture** Includes information about growing fruits, vegetables and other plants.

For composting information, see https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/ag-hub/publications/how-compost (FN1903)

Useful Terms

Annual – planted and harvested in one season (spinach, tomatoes, peas)

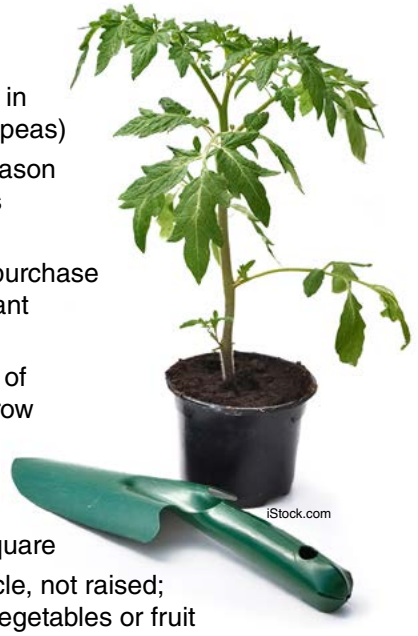
Perennial – grows back each season without planting for several years (asparagus, rhubarb)

Transplants – young plants for purchase that have started growing in a plant nursery or garden center

Furrow – most common method of planting; plants are in a straight row

Square foot – planting method of dividing the garden into 4- by 4-foot squares and planting one variety within the square

Hill – method of planting in a circle, not raised; good for large vegetables, vine vegetables or fruit



Books for Learning

Books will excite and educate children about gardening.

- "The Carrot Seed" by Ruth Krauss
- "Growing Vegetable Soup" by Lois Ehlert
- "Grow a Pumpkin Pie!" by Jane E. Gerver

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