



Gardening with Children Ages 8-10

Why Garden with Children?

- They can experience the cycle of life first hand.
- It will teach them responsibility and foster creativity.
- It will give them an understanding of our dependence on nature and its abundance.

Gardening with children ages 8 to 10 can be particularly rewarding since they have more independence and enjoy working with adults on important projects. It gets them outside and connects them with nature. They can ask questions, explore, learn cause and effect, and gain skills in planning and problem solving.

Ideas to Consider

- Give them their own space, whether a raised bed, pots or ground plots. Each child should have their own space.
- Keep it small because a smaller space is more manageable and everything seems larger through a child's eyes. Start small and increase size with their increasing age and interest.
- Place their garden in the best possible spot with adequate sun and a water source.
- Use serious work tools. Do not give them plastic tools that may break and make a new gardener frustrated.

Some Activities

Children in this age group will have ideas about the kinds of things they would like to grow and nurture, so allow them to plan their garden. They will need reminders to carefully read the seed packets for germination times, spacing, and days until harvest. Sometimes trial and error can be a great teacher of how and when to grow in your garden space.

Improve Garden Soil before Growing Vegetables

Adding composted chicken or steer manure in a designated garden bed will help children understand the importance of nitrogen in the garden and how using animal manure is a good way to recycle waste while helping plants grow. They may say it's "icky" and "disgusting" but they should be encouraged to be scientists. *Vegetable Gardening in Oregon* (pg. 1) has some information.

<http://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/ec871.pdf>

Build A Worm Bin

Worm bins can be constructed out of many different materials and can be as large or as small as wanted. When building a worm bin, you need to think about a container, bedding, oxygen and food. You will be creating a decomposing micro-ecosystem. You need to consider a material that can best handle the decomposition process, the moisture, and potential heat and cold throughout the year.

Composting with Worms <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9034>

Worms Eat My Garbage by Mary Appelhof is about setting up and maintaining a worm bin.

Planting Corn and Sunflowers

Planting teaches children the depth for sowing seeds of different sizes and the separation needed to give plants enough space to grow. How long will it take for them to germinate? How tall will they grow? Have they placed them in an appropriate spot in the garden? Should the seeds be soaked before planting to decrease the germination period?

Growing Your Own offers “how to” information on a wide variety of plants.

<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9027>

Plant For Pollinators

Begin by observing which pollinators frequent your garden. Do you have bees, butterflies, hummingbirds? What color flowers do pollinators prefer, such as red, purple, pink, white and yellow. Honeysuckle, salvia and bean plants are all options for hummingbirds, while milkweed is an option for monarch butterflies. The following herbs also attract pollinators: anise hyssop, basil, catnip, chives, cilantro, dill, fennel and lavender. *12 Plants to Encourage Pollinators*

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/12-plants-entice-pollinators-your-garden>

Add Literacy

There are many wonderful picture and instructional books about gardening that children appreciate before they begin and while they are working in the garden. Reading aloud to them invites questioning and can be a springboard for garden plans. Your local librarian will be happy to help you find some resources that both you and your child will enjoy. Here are a few suggestions:

- “Tops and Bottoms” by Janet Stevens
- “Gardening Lab for Kids: 52 Fun Experiments to Learn, Grow, Harvest, Make, Play, and Enjoy Your Garden” by Renata Fossen Brown
- “Let’s Get Gardening” by DK
- “How Plants Work” by Linda Chalker-Scott
- “Plants You Can’t Kill” by Stacy Tornio
- “Dana Digs In” by Laura Pedersen
- “Harlem Grown” by Tony Hillery
- “The Little Gardener: Helping Children Connect with the Natural World” by Julie A. Cerny
- “One Small Square – Backyard” by Donald Silver
- “Flowers Are Calling” by Rita Gray
- “Bees, Bugs and Butterflies: A Family Guide to our Garden Heroes and Helpers” by Ben Raskin
- “The Reason For A Flower” by Ruth Heller

Oregon State University Resource

Educator’s Guide to Vegetable Gardening <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9032>

Master Gardener™ Advice

- Call the Home Horticulture Helpline: 503-655-8631 (Clackamas County), 503-821-1150 (Washington County), 503-445-4608 (Multnomah County).
- For 10-Minute University™ handouts and class schedule, visit www.cmastergardeners.org

Oregon State University Extension Service prohibits discrimination in all its programs, services, activities, and materials on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, genetic information, veteran’s status, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs)