



Kids and Gardening

A note for parents

**Hillermann's
Kids' Club**

It's never too early to start your kids gardening! Children of all ages can learn to appreciate the beauty of nature and gain wonders from "getting their hands dirty." Children can learn responsibility and patience from caring for their gardens. They can experience success alongside of failure watching plants thrive and fail. You can virtually touch on every school subject while in the garden with your children.

- **MATH:** measure the amount of fertilizer used when planting or feeding. Track plant heights and plant growth. Measure even rows for your vegetable garden. Predict your harvest based on the number of plants and how much each should produce.
- **SCIENCE:** Conduct an experiment by using different fertilizers, seeds, lighting or media when planting. Discuss the circle of life. Talk about insects and how some actually help us. Teach your children how some plants are used as medicine.
- **READING & WRITING:** Share garden stories. Have your child keep a journal of your garden and how it progresses.
- **ART:** Discuss color combinations when planning a garden. Create colorful plant markers for your garden. Draw or paint your favorite gardens. Have your children actually map out their own garden on drawing paper.
- **HISTORY:** Teach your children about Native Americans and Pilgrims and how they taught each other how to grow different plants.
- **SOCIAL STUDIES:** Talk about how different plants grow in different parts of the world. Discuss how other cultures use plants in their everyday life.

Other tips for gardeners working with kids!

1. A picture is worth a thousand words. Never tell kids something you can show them.
2. Young kids have a very short attention span. Make sure that you have lots of options available so they can get started immediately and stay busy. Digging holes is one thing that seems to hold endless fascination.
3. Instant gratification helps a lot. Plant radishes even if you don't like them, they come in up in 3 or 4 days.
4. Growing their own will generally get kids to try eating things they otherwise wouldn't walk into the same room with.
5. **GETTING DIRTY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF GROWING UP!**

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6. Your role should be as facilitator, rather than as a leader who imposes direction. Be a good model.
7. When giving out supplies to several kids, try to keep seeds, tools, etc. as similar as possible to avoid the inevitable squabbles.
8. After an activity, do something to reinforce what everyone has learned. Talk about what went on, who did what, who saw what. If you can, have them write things down or draw pictures. If they are too young, take direction.
9. Many kids who won't talk in a large group will often speak easily in a small group.
10. When working with older kids (past about 13), one-on-one works better than in groups, since gardening (and anything else that could get you dirty) is a remarkably un-cool and disgusting way to spend time. Try to add responsibility and ownership to projects. ("Jordan is in charge of the wheelbarrow today.") Try pairing up older kids with younger ones. Rest assured that if you give them a healthy respect for gardens and green things when they are young, it will stay with them throughout their lives.



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