



HIP HOP's Guide to Gardening for Kids

From About.Com <http://gardening.about.com/od/gardeningwithkids/ht/TipsChildGarden.htm>

Choosing the Plants: More than likely kids will choose vegetable they like to eat. Remember that the garden space is small, so stick to a handful of varieties. Include some flowers as well. Bright flowers at child height, like zinnias and cosmos, will keep them fascinated and also make good choices for cutting and bringing indoors. You can't miss with sunflowers. Every kid is amazed at anything that grows 8 feet tall.

Starting Seeds: Let the kids help with starting the seeds. Some of the seeds may be too small for little fingers, but they can always be the helper who covers them with soil.

Garden Journals: To keep the kids interested until the plants come up, have them start a garden journal. They can draw a picture of what they think the plants will look like and make notes about when they planted the seeds and when they first saw a sprout pushing up. The journal can continue throughout the garden season with more notes and pictures of the garden and even the bugs that visit. Make sure they write down what they enjoy best about gardening.

Put the Garden Where They Will See It: To start the garden, pick a sunny spot in the backyard near where the kids play or often walk by. The more they see their garden, the more they'll notice changes. Keep the space to about no more than about 4' x 4'. If you don't have a yard, you can still have a garden in pots on a patio or inside on a windowsill, maybe even in their room.

Playing with Dirt: Remember that kids love playing with dirt. Let them help you prepare the soil, even if all they are capable of is stomping on the clumps. Kid sized tools will make them feel even more a part of the project.

Identify the Garden as Theirs: Mark each plant with the tag or seed packet it came with, so that the kids can see what the flowers or vegetables will look like. Also make a sign for the whole garden with the child's name, so everyone can see that it's their garden.

Playing with Water: Playing with water is right up there with playing with dirt. Give the kids a small watering can to use on their garden. Show them how to gently let the water go right to the roots of the plants. Hoses are just asking for trouble. They are simply too heavy for little hands to control.

Include the Whole Environment: You can also teach them about mulching and composting, by letting them spread grass clippings and shredded leaves around their plants to conserve water and help feed the plants. Don't forget to point out any interesting insects.

Patience Isn't the Only Virtue: Kids don't have a lot of patience and they may try to pull up their radishes just to see if they are ready. Let them keep tabs this way. They can write it in their garden journal to see their progress. You can also let them sample the small radishes, to see if there is a taste difference from the big ones.

Let Them Make Their Own Mistakes: Sometimes adults don't have a lot of patience either. Let the kids have control of their garden. If it's messy, it's their mess. Let them enjoy it and take pride in their own piece of land.

More links to help all of us garden with kids too! <http://family-fun.kaboose.com/gardening-ages-stages.html>, www.kidsgardening.com, www.gardening.cornell.edu, www.farmdiscoverycenter.org