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For Immediate Release

Gardening with Kids

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Vegetable gardening with kids can provide a variety of positive benefits. Regardless of the time of year, it's always a good time to start gardening with kids. Engaging kids in gardening can be advantageous to improving their nutrition and health, physical activity, environmental stewardship, a sense of accomplishment and relationship building with adults.

How can you begin gardening and growing with kids? Books are a great place to start the dialogue. Check out your public library to get started. A book on vegetables can get you talking about your child's favorites. Begin the discussion with descriptions of the colors, feel and taste of veggies. Visit a farmer's market or grocery store and talk about new or unusual vegetables that they might not have ever tried, but ones that they might like to learn about and grow. These learning opportunities can be expanded, and parents and children can explore the nutrition and growing facts of different vegetables. Then make a list of favorites and begin to think about a garden growing plan.

Gardening with a child can reap many rewards.

- Kids who have the opportunity to plan, plant, and harvest are more likely to eat vegetables and to continue eating vegetables throughout their lifetime. Research has shown that children who are involved in gardening increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables. Idaho State University's Linda Rankin, Ph.D., studied adolescents involved in school gardening activities. Both fruit and vegetable consumption, as well as Vitamin A, Vitamin C and fiber increased with gardening activities.
- Gardening can also help children apply concepts learned in school. Writing and journaling are important garden skills, and math and measurements are important in garden design. Youth can become engaged in learning more through gardening literature - both nonfiction and poetry - and by increasing their own literacy skills through writing and recording their observations. The opportunity to experience nature and learn about plant science and horticulture should not be downplayed.
- Physical activity is enhanced in an enjoyable way.
- Family relationships can be enriched with gardening. Many adults have positive memories of gardening with caring family members. Maybe it was because it was a fun and stress free activity! It can also be a great place to unplug from technology and turn on the

communication. When parents participate alongside their children, bonding and attachment results, which in turn leads to a happier childhood. Gardening can open up a whole world of conversations to have with children. Physical activity, nutrition, trying new foods, cooking, nature, caring for our earth and bugs are just a few examples.

Connect with your county extension and outreach office for more information on kids and gardening, and explore what your public library has to offer.

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