

# Gardening With Kids: A Win-Win Opportunity

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Do you want to spend some good-quality  
time with your children?

Do you want your child to eat more  
vegetables?

If you answer yes to both of these questions, you should consider planting a garden. Children and adults love watching plants grow and finally produce a crop. This provides an opportunity for you and your child to enjoy doing an ongoing activity together. This activity doesn't take too much time, either, because checking plant/crop progress is easy for you and your child. Vegetables grown and eaten fresh from the garden just taste SO much better.

Small gardens need not take much time or space. A flower bed-sized garden can produce many crops. You won't need too many veggies to start. Perhaps a small 12- by 12-inch bed each for radishes, lettuce and carrots may be big enough for you.

Be sure not to plant too many seeds in that small space. As the plants grow, they need adequate space to produce a crop. If seeds are planted too close together, they will produce a lot of foliage with very little vegetable.

Depending on the soil temperature, seeds usually need about 10 days to germinate before leaves start to appear. So be patient. Adding one tomato plant in the corner of your garden will allow your vegetable production to last throughout the summer. And finally, if you don't mind a vine plant, consider planting cucumber seeds.

If this looks like a bit more than you want to try, consider planting a cherry tomato plant in a big flower

pot. Children love to help here, too. Set the pot on the patio or close to the front door. That way, checking the progress of your plant will be easy for you.

Since pots are small, watering and weeding are quick. In August, you will have tasty cherry tomatoes. If you want vegetables before August, then plant radishes or lettuce in other pots. Lettuce and radishes grow quickly and usually are ready to eat in June. Check the seed package for the number of days needed before the vegetables are ready. Cucumbers also grow well in big pots.

But what does gardening have to do with children eating vegetables? Research shows that children who plant and care for a garden are more likely to eat the vegetables grown in that garden. The more participation in growing and preparing vegetables, the more likely the child will eat that food. In fact, some children raid the garden. Just be sure to have them rinse the vegetables in cold running water.

