Gardens and Growing

Learning about the life cycles of plants and animals can be fascinating for children. They have a natural curiosity about the world around them. There is something satisfying about planting a little seed and seeing it develop into a flower, fruit, or vegetable. It is also fun to learn about bugs that live in the garden.

Gardening teaches many skills and life lessons. Children learn how to be responsible and care for something other than themselves. They learn about things plants need to survive — water, sun, and good soil. And they learn what they don’t need — weeds and pests. They learn about how the earth takes care of itself, and how we need to take care of the earth.

It doesn’t take a big piece of land to make a garden. You can plant things in containers to set on your patio or deck. You can plant in flowerbeds or planter boxes. There are community gardens that you can join and plant your own crops to care for. There are lots of resources for how to do these things on the Internet, or in books that you can check out from the library.

Planting a garden — big or small — will be a great learning experience for your child, and provide you with fresh herbs, fruits, and vegetables.

More books about gardens and growing...

- *Surprise Garden*, by Zoe Hall
- *Up, Down and Around*, by Katherine Ayres
- *Farm Alphabet Book*, by Jane Miller
- *Growing Vegetable Soup*, by Lois Ehlert
- *Compost Stew*, by Mary McKenna Siddals
- *Pumpkin Pumpkin*, by Jeanne Titherington
- *Seeds! Seeds! Seeds!* by Nancy Elizabeth Wallace
- *Roots, Shoots, Buckets and Boots: Gardening Together with Children*, by Sharon Lovejoy
More fun with *Garden Friends*...

**In the kitchen**... As you prepare fruits and vegetables for your family to eat, have your child try to identify where the seeds are. Discuss if you can eat the seeds, like in a strawberry or tomato, or if you can’t eat the seeds, like in an apple.

**Science experiment**... Try sprouting seeds so your child can see how the seedling pops out of the seed and forms a stem. Seeds that sprout easily are: lima beans, pumpkin seeds, and wheat kernels. You can sprout them in a plastic Ziploc bag by placing a damp paper towel in the bag. Place the seeds or kernels between the towel and the bag, then seal it shut. Tape the bag onto a sunny window and look at it every day to see how it is growing.

**Herb garden**... Herbs are easy to grow indoors in small containers. Help your child plant herb seeds and place them near a sunny window. Cut the herbs to use in your cooking when they are ready to harvest.

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**Fingerplay**

**My Garden**

My garden has green beans,
*(hands waist high and fingers pointing down)*
Tomatoes so round,
*(form a circle with hands)*
Corn reaches high,
*(reach high)*
Carrots grow underground.
*(pat floor)*

I’ve watered and watered,
*(pretend to water)*
And picked all the weeds.
*(pretend to pull weeds)*
Tonight we’ll eat supper,
*(rub stomach)*
I planted as seeds!
*(point to chest proudly)*

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**Nursery Rhyme**

*Mary Mary Quite Contrary*

Mary Mary quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells and cockle shells and pretty maids all in a row.

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**What your library can do for you**...

Garden plants all have a scientific and a common name. Look for books at the library that describe plants and their names.