

Reasons for kids being in the garden

General benefits:

- Improved fine and gross motor skills.
- Improved communication and socialization skills.
- Enhanced self-esteem and a sense of responsibility.
- An interest in the future, seasons, cycles, the passage of time.
- Stimulation of sensory perception, creativity, and curiosity.
- Cultivate curiosity.
- Develop a love of nature and gardening.
- Enjoy special time they get to spend with you.
- Explore, discover, and investigate the natural world.
- Develop an understanding of life and living processes.
- Experience the beauty and joy of growing and caring for plants.
- Understand human dependence on plants.
- Improve science and social skills.
- Improve math skills.
- Improve reading, writing, and drawing through stories, books, and activities.
- Reduce frustrations, anxiety and stress.
- Increase receptiveness to the approach of other people.
- Channel aggressive feelings into productive behaviors through activities.
- Learn skills they can use in leisure and vocational activities for the rest of their lives.
- Make a difference in their community.
- Educate about the environment.
- Understand the relationship between agriculture, the environment, and people.
- Increase their testing abilities.
- Nurture creativity.
- Prepare child for environmental stewardship and to participate in a new energy and environmentally sustainable economy.
- Understand the science of global climate change.
- Identify steps to take in daily life to reduce climate change.
- Develop thinking skills.
- Search for answers.
- Communicate, work and live cooperatively.
- Be an informed, knowledgeable, and responsible citizen.



Based on research:

- Gardening/being outdoors improves thinking abilities: Children who participate in gardening projects score higher in science achievement than those who do not.
- It improves health & physical abilities: When children garden, they are inspired to eat fruits and vegetables and they get healthy activity. Dirt exposes them to germs which increases their immune system, and sunshine increases vitamin D.
- It improves their spirit: it develops meaningful connections with others and nature; develops communication skills, observation skills, nurturing skills, stewardship,

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recycling, composting, saving rainwater shows respect and responsibility for taking care of our planet. Plus, digging and planting improves your mood by increasing serotonin levels— a specific soil bacteria, *Mycobacterium vaccae*, triggers the release of serotonin in our brains; and dopamine is released in the reward center when you harvest fruits and vegetables, even if you see a fruit or berry you get a little jolt of joy.

For a full discussion about the reasons children benefit from being outside, please see Children & Nature Network at: www.childrenandnature.org

- Show/emphasize benefits of growing your own fruits & vegetables
- More nutritious, higher in nutrients.
- Reduced amount of pesticides you use.
- Save money.
- Physical activity.
- Promote health.
- Sense of appreciation.
- Stimulate new interests in botany, landscape, architecture, photography, nutrition, farmer's markets.
- Opportunity to give back.
- Create memories.
- Foster a sense of community.
- Enhance the environment.

Connect to school curricula

- Biology: evolution, ecology, animal behavior, photosynthesis, cellular respiration, weather, climate, nutrient cycles (water, carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus), botany, and genetics.
 - Chemistry: organic chemistry, soil nutrient levels, solubility, pH, and medicine
 - Physics: thermodynamics, reflection and refraction (site design) and electromagnetic spectrum (photosynthesis).
 - English (the use of food, nature, and gardening as symbols and metaphor within literature
 - mathematics (fractal patterns in nature, tessellations, geometry, scale diagrams (design).
 - Social studies (food security, globalization, human rights, environmental stewardship, social justice), ethnobotany.
- Culinary arts or foods: access to produce, composting, farm to plate outcomes.
 - Design studies: site design and drafting.
 - Business studies: costing, break even analysis, distribution, and marketing.
 - Communications technology: documentation of the garden, photography, video editing, and production.
 - Career and technology studies: construction of garden infrastructure; beds, benches, sheds, trellises, and sculpture.



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Connect to Bloom's Taxonomy for learning

- Visual/spacial: site design, layout, and an understanding of how it will change over time.
- Verbal/linguistic: talking about the garden, talking to friends/relatives/neighbors, journaling
- Logical/mathematical: site design and layout; material calculations, costing, and procurement; plant dates, size/yield.
- Bodily/kinesthetic: site construction, planting, and maintenance.
- Interpersonal: working closely and coordinating with others; planning and implementing activities.
- Intrapersonal: self-reflection and analysis of site design, plant growth, celebrations, additions like chimes, wildlife habitat, maintenance tasks like weeding or picking up, entertaining visitors, and the pluses and minuses of what you did at the beginning, middle and end of a project/growing season.
- Naturalistic: plant and animal care; site design layout to ensure the needs of each species is met.
- Musical/artistic: art in the garden, songs, beauty of flowers, plants.

