



Toolkit

A guide for growing your garden project



GROWING TOGETHER IN THE GARDEN

Gardening engages every child's innate wonder and care for the natural world, offers them opportunities to participate in hands-on learning, and teaches them where their food comes from. Young people who participate in gardening programs enjoy dramatic, documented gains across a diverse range of critical growth areas including personal well-being, nutritional awareness and attitudes, environmental stewardship and community connectedness. Noted benefits of youth gardening programs include:

Academic learning

Gardens provide practical, real world examples, and are versatile teaching tools for addressing topics across a curriculum.

Health & wellness

Gardening can support overall well-being through spending time in nature, engaging in physical activity, and sourcing nutritious food.

Social and emotional support

Gardening impacts the development of self-confidence, patience, responsibility, leadership, teamwork, community spirit, and environmental literacy while providing stress relief, engagement and emotional regulation.

GARDENING WITH **Kiwani**

Garden programs offer Kiwanis club members just as many rewards as there are for kids. Young gardeners share their contagious enthusiasm for learning and life, exciting everyone involved in the growing process. Gardening with youth provides opportunities to develop nurturing relationships across generations and to pass along traditions, knowledge and skills to the next generation.

KIWANIS & KIDSGARDENING – A SHARED VISION

KidsGardening and Kiwanis share the vision of creating a better world for kids, a world full of opportunities to thrive. Gardens provide an ideal setting and tool for nurturing kids — their bodies and minds — while improving the communities and ecosystems they live in. KidsGardening offers an extensive collection of resources to inspire and support clubs' youth garden endeavors.



WHAT IS A YOUTH GARDEN?

A youth garden is a garden space that is specifically designed for — and for best results, created by — young people to help them learn about plants, connect to nature and be involved in the gardening process from planting to harvest.

WHAT DOES A YOUTH GARDEN LOOK LIKE?

Youth gardens are diverse in size and scope. They are tailored to meet the needs of the kids and communities involved while maximizing the space and resources available. A garden space can be compact and comprised of a collection of containers or it can span across several acres. Some youth garden programs meet monthly or weekly, while others provide youth time in the garden every day.

Common methods for growing youth gardens include:

Container Gardens

Anything that will hold soil and has good drainage can be used to create a container garden. If growing edible plants, the container must be made from food-safe materials.

Raised Beds

Made from materials such as rot-resistant wood, concrete blocks and recycled composite products, raised beds can be used to transform even challenging spaces into gardens.

In-ground Gardens

Grass and existing landscaping can be smothered or removed to create a space to create seasonal gardens.

Indoor Gardens

Windowsills and grow lights provide opportunity for year round garden activities.

Hydroponic Gardens

Using innovative water-based growing techniques engages kids and shows them how plants can be grown in any setting.



KIDSGARDENING'S TOP TIPS FOR STARTING A YOUTH GARDEN

Here are a few top tips for 'digging' into a youth garden program:

Consider partnering with another organization that wants to engage youth in gardening

In addition to school garden programs, there are many ways to reach youth such as after school programming or clubs, summer camps, and neighborhood organizations. Other potential sites include community gardens, city parks, libraries, churches, vacant lots, nature centers, museums, residential institutions, and housing developments.

Recruit a strong and diverse garden committee

A garden is more likely to be successful and sustainable when the vision and work is shared by many garden supporters with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and skills.

Take time to plan

It is important to map out short and long-term goals along with a thoughtful garden design first. Don't forget to discuss your budget and plans for maintenance to ensure a sustainable garden.

Dream big, but start small

Jumping in with a large garden can be overwhelming and may require significant funding. Divide your planning and installation into small, manageable phases and expand as your support grows.

WHAT CAN YOU GROW?

Below are some ideas for creative themes that can help build enthusiasm around youth gardens:

Edible Gardens

What is more exciting than eating fruits and vegetables grown by your own hands? From recipe gardens like a pizza garden or salsa garden to multicultural food gardens showcasing plants celebrated by the diverse members of your community, edible gardens provide opportunities for kids to grow food for themselves, their families and their neighbors.

Pollinator Gardens

Pollinators such as bees and butterflies are critical for our food systems and environment, however their populations are in sharp decline. Kids can learn about and help address this environmental crisis by planting a garden filled with a variety of flowering plants, especially native ones, to provide pollinators with habitat and nectar and pollen to feed on year-round.

Sensory Gardens

With their incredible diversity of shapes, sizes, colors, scents, and textures, plants offer limitless options for designing a garden to engage the all senses. Sensory gardens offer safe and engaging spaces for all kids, but also offer special opportunities for reaching the growing number of children with sensory processing differences or unique developmental needs.

Reading Garden

A youth garden can be an ideal location to encourage reading. From creating comfortable sitting areas for individuals or groups to enjoy their favorite books, to growing theme gardens that spark kids' imaginations and bring their favorite books to life, gardens can serve as a tool to get kids excited about reading.

ABOUT KIDSGARDENING

KidsGardening is a national nonprofit organization creating opportunities for kids to learn and grow through gardening. As a leader in the youth gardening movement for nearly 40 years, KidsGardening provides grants and original educational materials to more than 3.8 million kids across the country.

In 2021 KidsGardening reached:

- **28,556 kids through the Kids Garden Community**
- **115,380 kids through grants, garden installations, and contests**
- **2.4M kids through activities**
- **2.3M kids through lesson plans**
- **82,895 kids through our curriculum publications**

GRANTS, AWARDS & CONTESTS

Each year KidsGardening offers a variety of grant opportunities for schools and nonprofit organizations.

These grants offer seed money and supplies to help launch new garden programs and expand existing ones.

KidsGardening also host annual contests, including a garden photo contests and a Kids Garden Month each April, that engage and inspire youth gardeners.

KIDS GARDEN COMMUNITY



KidsGardening supports an online social network called The Kids Garden Community. The Kids Gardening Community is a place where educators, caregivers, and garden community volunteers can come to ask questions, make connections, access resources, learn from each other and stay inspired in order to get more kids learning through the garden.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

KidsGardening has a vast array of free digital and print resources to provide inspiration and knowledge to help support youth garden programs including:

- Activities
- Lesson plans
- How-to articles
- Garden Stories
- Growing Guides
- Digging deeper articles
- 2 Email Newsletters: Kids Garden News and an Activity E-Kit
- Webinars and online courses
- Formal and informal garden-based learning curriculum

