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Gardening with your Children

Gardening tips with Candi Wingate

Gardening with kids can be a fun, educational opportunity. Through vegetable gardening, your kids can learn about our environment, soil science and minerals, foods, nutrition, and chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, etc.). Additionally, gardening is just fun: after all, kids get to play in the mud! Further, your kids can enjoy the "fruits" of their labor.

First, you will select the space for your vegetable garden and what vegetables you would like to grow. The size of the space available to you will, to some degree, affect what vegetables you will grow. For

example, if you want to grow corn, you will need a larger garden (unless you want to grow only a very small amount of corn). Your soil will also affect what vegetables you will grow. Sandy soil is good for growing melons. Dark brown soil is good for growing beans, tomatoes, and carrots. (TIP: if you are new to gardening, choose vegetable plants that are hearty. For example, chives are hard-to-kill plants that can survive and thrive with little tending from humans. Early successes with hearty plants give kids a sense of success and encouragement in their gardening skills.)

Next, you will need to prepare your soil for planting. Preparing your soil includes tilling the soil, weeding it, mixing in organic matter, and moistening the soil. (TIP: enjoy the opportunity to play in soil. This is one of the most fun parts of gardening for kids.)

Then, you will be ready to plant your seeds or starter plants. Make sure to follow the instructions provided with the plant or seed. (TIP: have a ruler or tape measure handy. Let your kids measure distance between plantings and praise them generously for their precision.)

Some plants require daily watering. All plants should be weeded at least weekly. As your vegetables develop and ripen, you will need to remove ripe vegetables promptly. Vegetables that rot on or near the plant can discourage further vegetable production. (TIP: as you remove your first ripened vegetables, wash and eat them promptly. Let your kids experience the wonderful tastes that they have created with their own hands. Vegetables that ripen thereafter can be prepared for meals or canned: these experiences provide further fun, learning opportunities for your kids.)

Some vegetables can have subsequent plantings. For example, you can plant carrots and radishes every two to three weeks.

When your growing season is done, remove any unripened fruit (some may still ripen inside your windowsill). Some vegetable plants will need to be removed; some others will need to be trimmed back to near soil level. The information that came with your plants or seeds will tell you what to do. (TIP: here again, your kids will have the opportunity to play in soil. Make an afternoon of it and have a ball.)

Then, you can start planning your garden for next summer. Some vegetable plants are perennials (i.e., they come back year after year with no need to replant them). For example, chives are perennials. Some vegetable plants are annuals (i.e., they die out at the end of the growing season and will need to be replanted each spring or summer). For example, carrots are annuals. When planting annuals, plan for plant rotation. Each plant takes specific nutrients from the soil; rotation prevents a decrease in soil fertility. (TIP: include your kids in planning so that they can feel more invested in the garden).



Candi Wingate is an award winning nationally recognized child care expert. She has been a nanny, owned a nanny agency, started three online nanny databases, authored "100 Tips for Nannies & Families" and "The Nanny Factor: A Parent's Guide to Finding the Right Nanny for Your Family," plus is a wife and mother of two. So when it comes to the nanny industry, she is your expert.

Candi Wingate is the founder of Nannies4hire.com, Babysitters4hire.com, Care4hire.com and a Nanny Agency. Her nanny experience actually goes way back. She was a nanny for a family with five children, which included newborn twins. After becoming a nanny and working in a nanny agency for several years, she purchased the successful Nation-Wide Nanny Placement Agency. After finding that the company needed to expand, Nannies4hire.com, Babysitter4hire.com and Care4hire.com were born.

Nannies4hire.com is one of the largest, most successful online nanny and family database serving the United States and Canada. As part of this database, you can conveniently search full-time, part-time, temporary, summer, babysitting, live-in and live-out nannies by zip code 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Nannies4hire.com database is designed to easily assist families in finding a quality nanny for their specific needs and requirements. Registered families may search by

detailed characteristics to help pinpoint the perfect nanny for their family. In addition, helpful tools are available, including sample interview questions, a sample reference form and a sample contract. Nannies4hire.com also gives you advice, tips and information that will help you and your nanny connect on a social and personal level.

Babysitters4hire.com/Care4hire.com is an online database for families and caregivers to search babysitters, housekeepers, tutors, elder/companion care, pet sitters and other miscellaneous service. A free preview of available caregivers is available to families. Whether you need a caregiver for a few hours to a few days, you will find it at Care4hire.com. Once you are a registered member, you will be given immediate access to caregiver through email and phone.

Nannies4Hire.com has been named as one of the INC500, by INC magazine, is the recipient of the Mom's Choice Award and the 2010 Nebraska Distinguished Entrepreneur of the Year Award and is an ongoing media resource for television, radio and online organizations including ABC's Good Morning America, CNN.com, The Dr. Phil Show and ABC's Supernanny, to name a few. Since 1987, Candi and her services been helping wonderful families and

