

## Creative Gardening with Children

**THIS SPRING** teach children that fruits and vegetables don't always come from the store. Children enjoy digging in dirt, looking for worms and bugs, planting seeds and they love to water plants and anything else in the near vicinity! Children also enjoy watching plants grow and harvesting what they have grown. Gardening cultivates children's natural curiosity and helps them develop a love of nature.



- Create a "garden recipe book" with recipes children have brought from home using items grown in the garden.

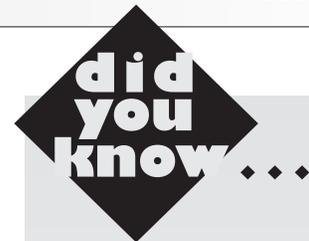
### African-American Garden

### International Gardens

- Teach children about a particular part of the world or specific country and choose plants that are representative of that region to grow in the garden.
- Find out children's cultural backgrounds or ethnicities and use plants from their native countries.
- Incorporate art that reflects a particular country or region of the world.
- Use plants that are native to a country or region that you are teaching concurrently in a social studies unit.

- Create a garden using plants that are native to or frequently used in African countries or that were used in America by African slaves such as collards and other greens, okra, watermelon, yams and black-eyed peas.
- Learn to cook traditional African foods and have the children taste the dishes.
- Using a map, show children where Africa is located and read books featuring African traditions and holidays.
- Read about George Washington Carver's contribution to sustainable gardening through crop rotation.

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- ▶ May 6th is Child Care Provider Appreciation Day, a great day to celebrate and thank the child care professionals in your child's life.
- ▶ There is no credible evidence that any type of screen time is beneficial to babies and toddlers and some evidence that it may be harmful.
- ▶ Toddler and preschooler screen time and television viewing is linked to increased body mass index.
- ▶ Screen time for children under 3 is linked to irregular sleep patterns and delayed language acquisition.
- ▶ Between their first and second birthday, on any given day, 64% of babies and toddlers are watching TV and videos, averaging slightly over 2 hours. Thirty-six percent have a television in their bedroom.

Source: *Commercialfreechildhood.org*

### Quotable Quotes

“Why try to explain miracles to your kids when you can just have them plant a garden.”

– Robert Brault

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# Creative Gardening with Children

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## Asian-American Garden

- Create a garden using plants that are native to or used frequently in Asia, such as broccoli, bok choy, eggplant and snow peas.
- Learn to cook typical Asian foods and have the children taste the products.
- Using a map or globe show children which countries make up Asia and connect geography to vegetation, culture and food.
- Have children write and share Haiku poems to explore Japanese culture.



## Latin-American Garden

- Create a garden using plants that are native to or used frequently in Latin countries, such as tomatoes, tomatillo, cilantro and peppers both sweet and hot.
- Learn to cook typical Latin foods and have the children taste the dishes.
- Using a map, show children where the Latin countries are located and tie geography to vegetation, culture and food.
- Plan a fiesta with Latin music and food using produce from the garden.

## Theme Gardens

Theme gardens are typically based on child-related topics. Young children are experiential, hands-on learners and can be motivated to learn through a garden theme, especially if it is one they helped create. Theme gardens can promote outdoor learning, exploration and discovery.

### ABC Garden

- Have children plant an alphabet garden that includes one plant whose name begins with each letter of the alphabet. To get you started: arugula, beans, carrots, cucumber, dandelion greens, eggplant, fennel, garlic, kale, lettuce, melons, mint, nasturtium, onions, peas, radishes, squash, strawberries, tomatoes, thyme, watermelon and zucchini.
- Make and decorate alphabet letter markers to use in the garden.

## Vegetable Snack Garden

- Encourage children to grow fruits and vegetables that they would like to taste, favorites as well as new items.
- Incorporate nutrition lessons such as eating a rainbow.
- Grow a Pizza Garden that includes plant ingredients on a pizza such as, tomatoes, sweet peppers, onions, garlic, basil and oregano.
- Grow a Salsa Garden that includes plant ingredients found in salsa such as, tomatoes, onions, hot peppers, corn and cilantro.
- Have children keep a food journal to record the new fruits and veggies they try.
- Build and maintain a compost bin in your garden.
- Discuss when to plant/harvest vegetables in the garden.
- Learn about plant life cycles.

## Peter Rabbit Garden

- Have children read *Peter Rabbit* and create a garden with plants Peter Rabbit would like such as, cabbage, carrots, lettuce and celery.
- Have children create a Peter Rabbit play to act out in their garden.
- Create a “nest” space in the garden where children can sit and read Peter Rabbit and other books.

## Jack and the Bean Stalk Garden

- Create a bean teepee in your garden by planting pole beans to grow up poles in the shape of a teepee.
- Plant giant sunflowers.
- Read “Jack and the Bean Stalk” in the garden.
- Dissect a bean seed.
- Make a bean seed necklace.

## American History Garden

- Learn about plants that are native to North America or the state you live in.
- Plant vegetables used by Colonial Americans for food, like corn, pumpkins and squash.
- Plant a garden with heirloom tomatoes and traditional herbs.

— Adapted from *Kitchen Garden Themes*,  
NC Cooperative Extension

## KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

# Go Screen-Free May 2–8, 2016



**MANY PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS** are concerned about the amount of time children spend with screens, and with good reason! Research shows that screen time gets in the way of activities known to be good for young children, such as playing creatively and interacting with caring grownups. Research shows that children who spend less time with screens fall asleep faster, sleep longer, eat healthier and get more exercise.

### Healthy Kids in a Digital World: Remember to Unplug!

#### Unplug to Connect

Children need nurturing relationships! Kids who spend less time with screens spend more time with their families. No app or program is as interactive as a teacher, parent or playmate.

Caring adults help children:

- Feel comfortable with themselves
- Have successful friendships
- Love learning

Children benefit from connecting with nature, too:

- Watch clouds
- Splash through puddles
- Collect leaves

#### Healthy Kid Tip:

Screen-free connections don't have to take a lot of time; they can easily happen every day, for example, chat on the way home from child care, cook meals together and share songs and stories during bath time.

#### Unplug to Learn

With so many devices... smart phones, tablets, e-books, TV, apps, digital games, videos... screen-free time is more important than ever!

How do preschoolers learn best?

- By exploring with all their senses
- Through hands-on, free play
- By having lots of conversations
- When grown-ups read to them

Children who spend less time with screens:

- Do better in school
- Have more time for creative play and interacting with caring adults—two activities essential to learning

#### Healthy Kid Tip:

Choose books without added noises and moving pictures—let kids imagine their own. Digital features can interfere with story understanding, which is an important step toward literacy.

#### Unplug for Health

Given the chance, young children love to run, skip, jump, dance and climb!

Children who spend less time with screens:

- Fall asleep faster
- Sleep longer
- Eat healthier
- Get more exercise

Be a positive role model, children learn screen-time habits from parents and caregivers.

#### Healthy Kid Tips:

- Encourage outdoor, free play as often as possible—it helps develop strong, healthy bodies.

- Make bedtime routines screen-free—children who use screens at night have more sleep problems.
- Keep screens out of bedrooms.
- Enjoy screen-free, family meals—they encourage healthy eating and conversation.

#### Unplug and Play

Children naturally create their own fun, but if they ever need help getting started, here are a few suggestions:

- Alone or with a friend:
  - Draw with sidewalk chalk
  - Dig in the mud
  - Make sheet tents for indoor camping
  - Play dress-up
  - Build with cardboard boxes
- During chores:
  - Play “I Spy” at the grocery store
  - Make sorting laundry a game
  - Sing songs while cleaning up
- Traveling and eating out:
  - Find cars in different colors
  - Count stops until your station
  - Draw on paper napkins and placemats

#### Healthy Kid Tip:

Celebrate screen-free week. For more screen-free ideas visit [screenfree.org/screen-free-activities](http://screenfree.org/screen-free-activities).

— Adapted from Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

~~~ **Celebrate Cinco de Mayo!** ~~~

**Creamy Beans with Avocado**

|                             |                   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Pinto beans .....           | 2 (15 ounce) cans |
| Black beans .....           | 2 (15 ounce) cans |
| Kidney beans .....          | 1 (15 ounce) can  |
| Tomatoes, chopped .....     | 2                 |
| Garlic cloves, minced ..... | 2                 |
| Cilantro, chopped .....     | ¼ cup             |
| Chili powder .....          | 2 tsp             |
| Salsa, fresh .....          | 2 cups            |
| Avocado, chopped .....      | 2                 |

1. Drain and rinse the beans. In a slow cooker, combine all the beans, tomatoes, garlic, cilantro, chili powder and salsa.
2. Cover and cook on low 4 hours. Stir in avocado and serve with raw veggies, corn tortillas, tostados or homemade tortilla chips.

Yield: 14 servings

Meets requirement for fruit/vegetable and protein/meat alternate

— Adapted from *Prevention.com*

**Muffin Tin Chicken Tacos**

|                                 |            |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Flour tortillas (8-inch) .....  | 6          |
| Chicken, cooked, shredded ..... | 8 ounces   |
| Salsa .....                     | 1 cup      |
| Cheddar cheese, shredded .....  | 1 cup      |
| Lettuce, shredded .....         | (optional) |
| Sour cream, guacamole .....     | (optional) |

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray 12 muffin tins with cooking spray.
2. Cut two 4-inch rounds from each tortilla. Microwave for 15 seconds. Place each in a muffin cup, use a juice glass to press into the cup. Tortilla scraps can be baked into homemade tortilla chips.
3. Place 1 Tbsp cheese into the bottom of each cup. Toss the chicken with salsa. Divide chicken mixture between the cups and top with remaining cheese.
4. Bake 18–20 minutes until cheese is melted and tortillas are crisp. Top with optional ingredients if desired.

Yield: 6 servings (serving size, 2 tacos)

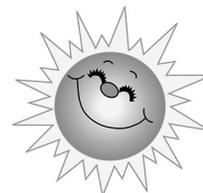
Meets requirement for grains/bread and protein/meat alternate

— Betty Crocker

Activity Corner

**LET'S MOVE...  
WARM WEATHER FUN**

- Create sidewalk art. Use colored chalk or “paint” with water and brushes.
- Play hopscotch. Draw a hopscotch game on the sidewalk.
- Create a parade. Dress up kids, decorate wagons, tricycles, bikes and strollers.
- Visit a farmer’s market. Walk and talk about the foods. Buy something to prepare and eat at home.
- Run through a garden sprinkler.
- Go fruit picking: berries, peaches, apples, whatever is in season where you live.
- Fly a kite.
- Blow bubbles.
- Walk to the store or library.
- Visit a petting farm.
- Enjoy a new playground.
- Play games that move: *Ring around the Rosie*, *London Bridge*, and others.
- Plan a “wash day”: wagons, tricycles and outdoor toys.
- Go on a nature hike. Look for wild flowers, insects, bird’s nests, rocks and leaves.
- Work in a garden, maybe your own!



— Adapted from *Nibbles for Health*

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and is produced by:

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Child Health & Nutrition Program**

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**Food Funny** Q: How many bananas can you eat if your stomach is empty?  
A: Just one—after that, it’s not empty anymore.