

# University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources

Making a Difference for California

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## PRESCHOOL NUTRITION NEWS

CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE Placer and Nevada Counties

### GARDENING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

**G**ardening is a fun and easy way for children to learn about fruits and vegetables. Children are more willing to try new vegetables, if they take part in growing them. Gardening also gives children a sense of satisfaction and pride when they see what they have grown.

The process of planting, tending, and harvesting a garden provides daily opportunities for young children to learn valuable lessons, enjoy physical activity, and reap the fruits and vegetables of their labor. Many educational activities, such as art, reading, and math skills, can be part of a garden project.

#### Tips for success in a preschool garden:

★ Start small with a spring salad garden. If you (or one of your staff) are an experienced gardener, you have an idea of what size garden will work in your situation. If you are new to gardening, start small in just a couple of containers or a few square feet in the yard. Pick easy-to-grow plants for salads: a variety of leaf lettuces, some radishes, and some fragrant herbs like chives or parsley.



★ A successful garden needs a few key things. Make sure your garden will get plenty of sun and water. Use potting soil to plant in containers. Add a soil conditioner, e.g. “Paydirt” or “Amend” to garden soil and mix it in before planting. Read the seed packet or plant label for planting instructions.



#### Spring 2020

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#### More Resources

**Visit our website:**  
<http://ceplacer.ucanr.edu>

You can email a CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE representative with any questions or information needs. Also, please feel free to share any tips or suggestions you might have with other teachers!

## FRESH SPRING SALAD RECIPE

**Let kids eat what they grow! Use any lettuce you are able to grow in this yummy salad.**

Make about 8 preschool-size servings.

### Salad Ingredients:

- 1 cup baby spinach
- 1 cup spring lettuce mix
- 1 cup sliced strawberries or any seasonal fruit

### Dressing Ingredients:

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 1 lemon, juiced
- 1 tablespoon honey or sugar
- 1 tablespoon mustard
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste

### Salad Directions:

1. Toss all ingredients in a large bowl.
2. Set aside.

### Dressing Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a blender, food processor or jar with lid. Blend or shake until well combined.
2. Add dressing to salad mixture to taste and toss well.
3. Serve.



## GARDENING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN (CONTINUED)

- ★ Choose child-sized tools. Young children do best with tools that fit easily into their hands. Large kitchen spoons and spatulas, perhaps from a yard sale, work great if you don't have small garden tools.
- ★ It's important for children to feel like the garden is really theirs, so be willing to put up with crooked rows and mixed-up plants. They can also get attached to their weeds and want to care for them right along with the vegetables and flowers. Many children also love to play in dirt, so set aside a small

area for digging, even after the planting is complete. Remember, your garden doesn't need to look perfect to produce perfectly delicious produce or to provide children with wonderful outdoor learning experiences and physical activity!



## GARDENING ACTIVITY

## GROW A DIRT BABY

### Materials:

- Paper thermos cups, 1 per child
- Raw wheat grass seeds (you can get them from the natural food market)
- Potting soil
- Construction paper cut into small pieces or foam pieces for creating a face
- Glue
- Colored markers

### Instructions:

Make a sample Dirt Baby 4-5 days in advance, so you have a sample to show children.

1. Pass out cups, 1 per child.
2. Punch a small hole in the bottom of each child's cup with a pencil.
3. Allow children to make a face on the cup using paper or foam pieces and markers.
4. After cup is decorated, fill the cup 2" from the top with soil.
5. Let children sprinkle 1 tablespoon of wheat grass seeds on top of the soil and cover with 1/2" more soil.
6. Water dirt babies and place in a sunny spot.
7. Wheat grass will grow in about 5 days.
8. Water as needed to keep soil moist.
9. After grass has grown, let children give their dirt baby a haircut.



# University of California Cooperative Extension

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**Happy Healthy Me...Moving, Munching & Reading Around MyPlate for 4- to 6-Year-Olds**  
Combines stories and literacy with nutrition education for Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten.

**Parent Workshops**  
Fun, interactive parent workshops are available. Please call for more information.

**Go Glow Grow**  
A preschool curriculum that teaches about healthy foods and what they do for the body.

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