

PRESCHOOL NUTRITION NEWS

A newsletter for preschool parents and teachers

Why Plant a Vegetable Garden?

A garden is not only a practical and cost-effective way to produce your own food, but it also provides other benefits for you and your family.

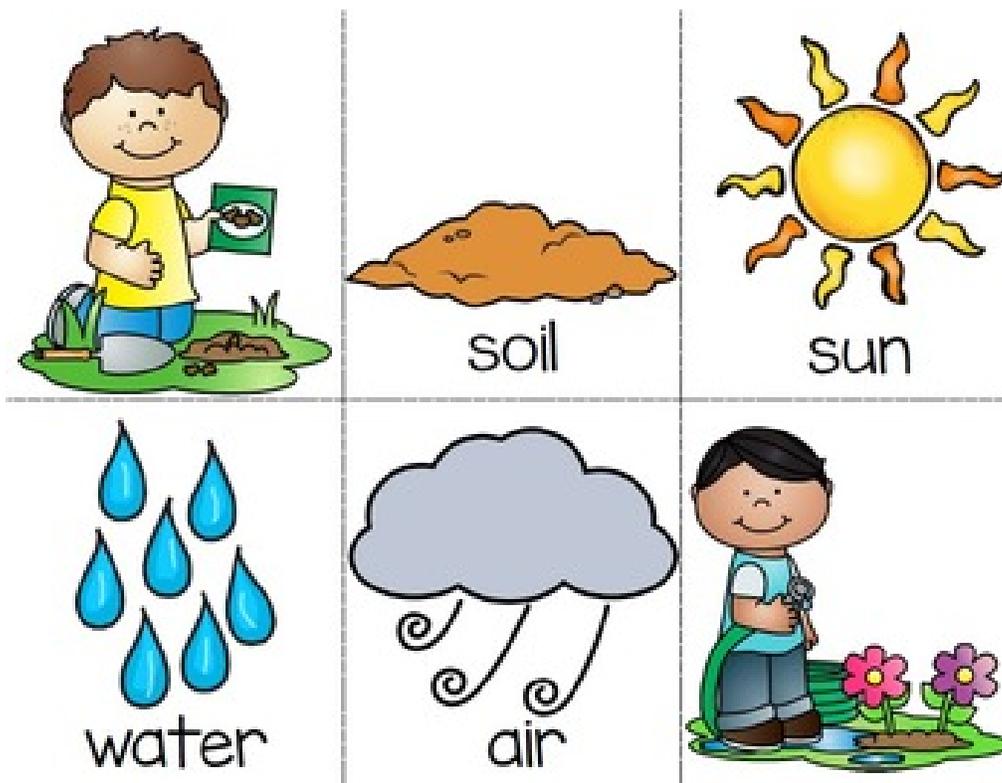
- **Gardening is fun for the whole family!**
- Gardening is good for your health. Tasks like digging, planting, and harvesting vegetables are great outdoor activities.
- **Gardening encourages the entire family to eat more fruits and vegetables.** Often even the pickiest eaters will enjoy sampling what they have grown.
- **Gardening is educational.** The garden is a hands-on classroom for the entire family. Even very young children can learn simple tasks, such as planting seeds and tending plants by watering and weeding. Children will also learn about plants, insects, nature, and teamwork when the family is in the garden.
- **Gardening is economical.** Seeds and starts are inexpensive. Planting containers can be made from recycled household items, such as empty milk jugs. A little extra time in the garden can also help offset your monthly grocery bill.

Gardening is a great family activity that gives everyone a sense of pride and accomplishment.



Tips for Gardening with Kids

- **Give them their own tools.** Choose only tools appropriate for their age. Tools should not be too big, heavy, or sharp.
- **Let them help choose.** Let children help you choose a container and the types of plants to grow. This will help children feel a sense of pride and encourage them to continue helping with the garden.
- **Plant some things that grow quickly.** The garden will be more interesting for children if they see what they planted growing bigger each day. Radishes and lettuces are great quick-growing plants.
- **Plant unusual plants.** Plant vegetables that are different from what you see in the grocery store, such as purple carrots, yellow tomatoes, or purple potatoes.
- **Encourage their interests.** Find out what children like to do in the garden. Some like to dig, some like to pull weeds, and some may just want to look for worms.
- **Let them help harvest.** Children will be excited to pick what they helped grow.
- **Encourage them to taste.** Children will be eager to taste what they helped grow. Be sure to rinse the harvested vegetables before they taste.
- **Reinforce the garden.** Reading storybooks about gardens, preparing foods grown in the garden, and drawing pictures of the garden are all ways you can get kids interested in the garden even when they are not in it.
- **Be patient.** In the garden children will get dirty, so make sure everyone is dressed for it. And always be prepared for some plants to get stepped on, broken, or destroyed. Gardening is a “learn by doing” experience.



What to Plant When?

Late Spring & Summer Planting

- Green Beans (April-June)
- Tomato Plants (May-June)
- Pepper Plants (May-June)
- Cucumbers (May-June)
- Summer Squash (May-July)
- Winter Squash (May-June)
- Basil (June)

See the Container Gardening Guide to learn more!

Late Winter & Early Spring Planting

- Kale (February-March)
- Lettuce (February-March)
- Potatoes (February-April)
- Peas (February-March)
- Radishes (February-April)
- Carrots (February-April)



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