



# NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

## What Grows in Grandma's (or Grandpa's) Garden? (January 28, 2023)

by Tulare/Kings Counties Master Gardeners

Whether you have grandchildren, children, or just your own sense of adventure, there are many attention-getting plants that will draw people into your garden and make it an exciting place to visit.

You will be doing children a big favor if you can attract them to the out of doors. According to Richard Louv in his best-selling book *Last Child in the Woods*, "Our children are the first generation to be raised without meaningful contact with the natural world." Citing the CDC (Centers for Disease Control), he says, "The childhood link between outdoor activity and physical health is clear." After the last several years of quarantines and isolation, we all know that for both physical and mental health, it is important to step away from the TV or computer and take in some fresh air and the beauty of our surroundings. And this can be done in the safety and comfort of your own yard.

What kind of plants will attract children? Plants that lived when dinosaurs walked the land; plants that are carnivorous; plants with really big flowers and fruits; plants that grow fast; and plants that stimulate the senses of smell and touch. Think about the kids who might come to your garden and what their interests are.

If you have a budding paleontologist in your family, you will want to include plants that have been around since the dinosaur days. Here are some of them that can be grown in our area: Horsetails (*Equisetum hyemale*) grow in tall spikes and are native California plants. They were an important source of nutrition for plant-eating dinosaurs. Cycads are a good choice for a tropical look. The one you may find, the Sago Palm (*Cyca revolute*), is not an actual palm but has a jungle-like palm appearance. Many types of ferns can fill out your dinosaur garden setting and attract little ones with their plastic dinosaurs ready for play. Remember, though, that it was much wetter when dinosaurs lived--so these plants need to receive regular water. A safer bet might be to plant these in a container in a shady spot.

One of our favorite plants and one of the rare carnivorous plants native to Tulare County is Dutchman's Pipe (*Aristolochia*). The odd pipe-shaped flower on this vine traps insects in its nectar and absorbs them. This plant is on the endangered plant list, so if you are able to procure and grow them successfully, you will be helping the environment while bolstering their population. That's a gardening adventure of the best kind!



Let's talk BIG. Kids like large flowers like our native Matilija Poppy (*Romneya coulteri*). It can have flowers 12 inches across and is often called the Fried Egg Plant because of its white petals and a yellow center. Don't forget sunflowers; there are many to choose from, and the resultant seeds make excellent bird food. How about pumpkins and zucchini? They grow quickly, and kids like hunting for them in the big leaves.



Some of the joys of being in a garden are the smells and feels of plants. Try planting furry Lamb's Ears (*Stachys byzantin*). Their gray foliage makes a good ground cover or edging plant, and you can show your little ones how to gently touch them. Use your imagination in choosing plants with fragrances: try Lavender (*Lavandula*), Sage (*Salvia*), our native Mock Orange (*Philadelphus*), or any of the fragrant herbs readily available. Mint varieties, including chocolate, may become new favorites!

Make your garden fun, and you and the children you know will like to be out in it. And don't forget, part of the fun is getting dirty and finding bugs and slugs. That is what Grandma's garden is all about.

### The Tulare-Kings Counties Master Gardeners will answer your questions:

Visalia Farmer's Market- 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 8-11 am, 2100 W. Caldwell Ave (behind Sears)

Feb. 3, 4, & 5 – Visalia SpringFest Home & Patio Show – Visalia Convention Center

February 11 - Rose Pruning Workshop, Woodlake Botanical Garden - 10 am – 1 pm

February 11 – Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop, Hurley School, Visalia – 11 am – 1 pm

February 18 – Gardening Central Valley Style – Hanford Library – 1:30 – 3 pm

**Questions? Call the Master Gardeners:**

Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30;

Kings County: (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m

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