

6 Benefits of Garden-Based Learning

If you have children or work with children, then you probably have noticed that hands-on experiences help them make connections to the lessons they are learning. This is especially true when the lesson involves something you enjoy or have made a hobby out of, such as gardening. Hands-on learning experiences surround us if we take the time to look, and educational opportunities abound with a little ingenuity to turn daily tasks into lessons.

Help your children establish a sense of responsibility surrounding planning, caring for, and harvesting their own gardens. Older children can even get in on the spacial awareness, science, and finances behind it all. These lessons easily transfer to a larger picture: namely, how their own responsibilities and care of something living is integral to their attention to personal moral values as they grow.

Benefits of Children in the Garden

The benefits of children working in the garden have been studied for decades, with connections to independent learning and [emotional growth identified as key potential effects](#). This could be due to the chores and tasks placed on young children early on in their development, which helps them gain a sense of importance and self-esteem, or even because of the confidence fostered by watching a plant grow and come to fruition under their close watch. No matter the study, the outcomes have reflected positively on children, which has led many educators to use gardens as part of their educational toolbox—[a lesson that can be mimicked at home, as well](#).

- **Fine and Gross Motor Skill Development**

Elementary age children can most definitely benefit physically from their involvement with working in the garden. The grasping, piling, manipulating, and problem-solving that comes with holding tools is wonderful for learning how to work with their hands. This is also excellent for hand-eye coordination.

- **Engages the Senses**

Children of all ages can engage in their senses to pay attention to their surroundings and make [connections to their own actions within it](#). In a day and age where technology reigns and instant gratification is commonplace, the awareness of what they see, smell, and hear fall by the wayside. These are important details children need to find their place within it all as they grow.

- **Teaches Responsibility**

Even small tasks create responsibility, but when working in the garden or yard, you can assign various jobs that are important to not only the garden but also the family. For example, not weeding or watering can kill a plant, leaving fewer plants to harvest. This means less food. Even winter can have tasks, such as clearing the porch or walkway with [a small snowblower](#) to ensure safety for those who cross it.

- **Encourages Healthy Choices**

Getting your kids into the fresh air is obviously better than sitting in front of a screen, but kids who help in the garden are also more likely to appreciate the outdoors, making it a lifelong habit. If you grow fruits and veggies, they also are more likely to want to eat the “fruits of their labor” (pun intended) and make healthier eating choices. This also allows them to make connections between food and food cost as they get older.

- **Boosts Confidence**

Anyone who has grown a plant understands their responsibility to it as a living organism. It needs care to flourish, and children very quickly grasp the concept of their own actions having an effect on their work. A positive sense of pride grows when children learn how they can coax a plot of dirt to yield beautiful things and understand that their own actions were behind this.

▪ **Develops Math and Science Skills**

Being surrounded by nature involves you with biology and chemistry in a hands-on manner that can't be taught sitting behind a desk. The math of the money that goes into a garden, as well as planning and planting, are all excellent practices to expose to children from a young age to help them see the practical purposes behind what they may learn in the classroom.

Ways to Get Children Involved

If this is all a new concept, then you might be stumped as to how to get your kids involved, but the following provides a few ideas to help spark their interest. Plus, the time you spend in the garden with your children is invaluable and can strengthen personal relationships, as well. Let children see that "work" isn't just something to complain about, and allow their natural curiosity and idea of play to be a part of their involvement with the upkeep of your yard and garden.

- Assign each child a task
- Keep a chore chart with family reward time
- Have personalized kid-sized tools
- Allow them their own space to plant within
- Let them choose their own plants
- Help them make correlations between work and play

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