

Cynthia Brian's Goddess Gardener Tips for Gardening with Kids

GIVE each child a pot or a plot of land to grow whatever they desire. When you give them the responsibility, they will rise to the task.

BUY size-appropriate tools. A hand trowel, rake, shovel, wheelbarrow, and bucket expressly for gardening chores gives a child a sense of accomplishment. Don't forget the garden gloves!

SUPPLY seeds that are easy to grow. Include vegetables such as carrots, radishes, beets and lettuces, and some pretty flowers like sunflowers, zinnias, marigolds and calendulas.

MAKE it fun by showing them how to use chopsticks to plant seeds.

BUY small two-to-four-inch containers of herbs for a windowsill garden. Dill, mint, sage, parsley, and oregano are simple to grow and can be snipped for pizza, spaghetti, and soups that put smiles on their faces.

GROW thornless succulents including ice plant, aloe vera, echeveria, and jade that require very little water or care.

PLANT theme gardens with your kids. Everyone loves butterflies and a Butterfly Garden will encourage kids to watch the evolution of nature from creeping caterpillar to graceful flyer. Include alyssum, butterfly bush, coreopsis, asters, salvias, Lamium, milkweed, penstemons, lavender, and snapdragons. Other ideas include a Pizza Garden with everything except the pepperoni and cheese, a sensory garden of plants with texture, taste, smell, sound and beauty. Or how about a 24-Hour Garden where each of the plants blooms at a different time? Use morning glories for the a.m., four o'clocks for the afternoon, evening primrose for early evening, and moonflowers for the night. If you have the room, one of my favorites is a Pie Orchard with peaches, apricots, cherries, pears, and a berry patch. Or two gardens my own kids loved were the Christmas Tree Farm which they planted leftover small pots of live trees, spruce, pine and fir, and the Halloween Cemetery of various types, colors, sizes, and textures of gourds and pumpkins.

SHARE plant and seed catalogs with your little sprouts. Let them select photos they find enticing and read to them the descriptions. Follow up with a socially-distanced, masked-wearing field trip to a nursery or garden center to investigate the various specimens.

ALLOW kids to experiment and design their own spaces. Rows don't have to be in straight lines. Eliminate adult ideas of perfection and instead shoot for enthusiasm and curiosity.

GIFT a magnifying lens to your child so they can get up close and personal with leaves, flowers, stamens and bugs.

MARVEL at the soil workers. Examine the worms and insects.

WALK around your fall landscape to choose colorful leaves for festive displays and to press into Christmas cards.

HELP them decorate for the holidays with natural berries and branches. Pyracantha, cotoneaster, and holly are filled with red berries. Wear gloves and offer help with the prickly holly and pyracantha.

BE CREATIVE by making garden art from steppingstones to scarecrows! My daughter painted a funny face on a broken rake that still guards our vegetable garden.

DOWNLOAD FREE coloring books to let kids color their world. There are seven different ones, all with botanical art that is simple and appropriate for little sprouts. <https://bit.ly/39CnSDv>

Happy gardening. Happy growing. Happy December.



This gorgeous fall landscape at John Windle's home offers a kaleidoscope of opportunities for art projects and festive compositions.

Photos Cynthia Brian



Although prickly, pyracantha berries are great as holiday décor.