

# Lamorinda

# OUR HOMES

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Lamorinda Home Sales

... read on Page D2

## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

### Growing with kids

Photos Cynthia Brian



Agapanthus is poisonous. Instruct children to admire but don't eat.

By Cynthia Brian

*"I rejoice when I see anyone, and especially children, inquiring about flowers, and wanting gardens of their own, and carefully working in them. For the love of gardening is a seed that once sown never dies, but always grows and grows to an enduring and ever-increasing source of happiness." ~ Gertrude Jekyll*

How immensely fortunate I was to grow up on a farm where both parents were connected to the land and taught their five children to care for plants and animals. At a very young age, we were each given a small plot of earth to tend our very own gardens. We could plant whatever we wanted: fruit, vegetables, flowers, trees, or even just let the weeds take over. Whatever we decided to do, we were told that the success or failure of our plantings was 100% our responsibility. Each of us received this gift with gratitude and excitement as we each created our unique and individualized design.

The benefits of introducing children to gardening are numerous and life-enriching. Kids are inherently curious and soak up new information

like sponges. Gardening with children encourages a lifelong commitment to good environmental practices and stewardship of our earth. Since gardening is a hands-on experience, kids relish getting dirty and wet, and especially enjoy finding and touching slimy creatures. As their grown-up garden guides, we must teach safety in nature. We must point out that they must never nibble a leaf or flower without knowing if the plant is edible as many plants are poisonous or can cause allergic reactions. The same holds true for picking up frogs, snakes, lizards, spiders, or other critters. Educating our little ones about the natural world and how humans cohabit is part of our critical supervisory function.

#### Benefits of Gardening for Kids

**Education:** Besides learning sustainable practices, kids are close-up witnesses to the circle of life. We plant a seed or seedling. We water, fertilize, and prune the plant. It matures, flowers, and possibly bears fruit. Annuals die at the end of the season. Perennials return the following year. Evergreen shrubs and trees maintain their leaves while deciduous plants are barren in winter and re-leaf in spring. Botany, biology, and ecology are all evident in the garden.

**Health:** Outdoor play is essential to developing a healthy body and mind. Gardening is an outstanding exercise and it's playful. Pulling hoses, carrying rocks, weeding, raking, pushing wheelbarrows, hoeing, and planting all contribute to stronger muscles and stress-free minds.

**Mental Well-Being:** Mindfulness and tranquility are part of the gardening experience. Numerous studies have shown how anxiety and stress are reduced by spending even 20 minutes outdoors in nature.



... continued on Page D6

Strip rose cuttings of the thorns, then allow children to smell the fragrance.