



# Growing a “Green” Garden

## Organic Gardening in a Child Care Setting

Children and organic gardening are meant for each other. Children get to dig in dirt, be physically active and witness the fascinating and ever-changing life cycles of nature. At the same time, they learn about insects, get to try new foods and develop a strong appreciation of the environment — to love and respect something that they need to care for and that gives back.

Gardening can be a wonderful addition to your curriculum and can provide year-round activities. Explore, experiment and learn together with the children. No previous experience is necessary. Your enthusiasm and sense of awe can be contagious and you can start with very little equipment or expense.

Organic gardening can be discussed in all parts of your program’s learning areas:

*Math:* sorting, classifying, measuring and counting.

*Science/Discovery:* planning, estimating, cooking, identifying insects, composting, planting.

*Motor Skills:* handling seeds, digging, pulling weeds, carrying watering cans.

*Language/Literacy:* reading seed packets, documenting growth.

*Creative:* collage with seeds or seed catalogues, sketching in the garden, drying flowers on paper.

*Social/Emotional:* team work, problem solving, empathy.

**An organic gardening project can also provide the opportunity to teach empathy and community awareness.**

After the garden is harvested, have the children decide what they are going to take home to their family, what will be eaten at the centre, what they are going to taste right away and what they are going to donate to a local food bank. You could make arrangements with your local food bank and go on a field trip with the children to drop off their donation.

**Organic gardening is a year round activity:** seed starting, seedling care, garden preparation, planting, tending, harvesting, cooking, sampling, donating, preparing garden beds for winter, winter investigating and spring renewal. Seed packets are fairly inexpensive and it’s fun for the children to grow plants from seeds. Use of rain water can also be incorporated as a teachable moment of water conservation as well as composting in the garden and in the classroom which will teach the children about environmentally-friendly waste management and fertilizer for their garden.

**You don’t need a lot of space for the organic garden.** A small patch of land or a few clay pots will do. Start your organic garden today and give children the opportunity to experiment, smell, touch, taste, plant, grow, nurture, observe and move. You will be amazed at how much you all enjoy it.

### Sprout bags

You will need:

- a few, clear, zipper lock bags
- various seeds
- paper towels

1. Moisten a sheet of paper towel (not dripping) with water
2. Put one or two seeds on it and fold it over once.
3. Put the paper towel with seeds in the bag and close it. Repeat this with the other seeds and bags.
4. Tape your bags to a sunny window and watch what happens. In a few days or weeks (depending on the type of seeds) you will see them sprout.

You can then transplant these sprouts directly into the garden after the last expected frost date in your area.

