

Gardening with Children Checklist

By Tara Schatz

- Best Plants for Growing With Kids.** To start out, choose plants that grow quickly and aren't too fussy. Here are some top choices:
 - Radishes.** These are probably the quickest vegetables you can grow. They germinate in three to five days, and are ready to harvest in two weeks. Radishes do best in cool weather, and they're really fun to pull up.
 - Sunflowers.** These massive flowers grow quickly, and will soon tower over your kids. Plant them around the edges of a square planting bed, and you will create a private sunflower house for your children to play in.
 - Lettuce.** It's great for snacking, grows fast, and is really nutritious. Choose green-leaf types over heading lettuce - they're less fussy.
 - Potatoes.** Most kids love to eat potatoes, and harvesting them is like digging for gold.
 - Cherry tomatoes.** Buy seedlings from your local nursery to get a jumpstart on the season, and be sure to plant them in full sun. Kids will love harvesting and snacking on these sweet little gems.
 - Pole beans.** Want another spot where your kids' imagination can bloom along with the plants? Try a bean teepee. Tie three or four 10-foot poles together at the top, forming the basic teepee structure, then plant a few bean seeds around the bottom of each pole. Beans grow really fast, and before long you'll have more than you can eat, plus a shady little hide-out.
 - Strawberries.** While strawberries aren't the easiest plant to grow, they are the most fun to harvest. Who can resist homemade strawberry shortcake, strawberry jam, or strawberry ice cream?
- Special tools for gardening with kids.** Don't buy cheap plastic tools that will break easily and frustrate your kids. Invest in high-quality tools that will last a few years.
 - Gardening gloves for little hands
 - Small garden trowel
 - Hand-cultivator
 - 1-gallon watering can
 - Shovel. Try to find one that is small enough for your child to use easily.
 - Garden rake
- Success strategies for gardening with children**
 - Give them a plot of their own.** Even a small plot that they can care for will make them feel trustworthy and responsible.
 - Engage your children from seed to table.** Want to raise healthy eaters? By allowing kids to grow their own food, and then teaching them how to prepare delicious, healthy meals with their harvest, you'll help them develop healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime.
 - Work behind the scenes.** Kids might not be ready for every gardening task. In order to ensure their success, you may have to do a little pest control, fertilizing, and watering yourself.

- Be sure to show off their gardens.** Take photos, give tours, praise their delicious harvest. This is motivation for future gardening endeavors.