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Teaching Your Kids To Garden With Garbage

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GARDEN NOTES

TEACHING YOUR KIDS TO GARDEN WITH GARBAGE

By Dennis Hinkamp

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The longer days and warmer temperatures are likely to lure young children outside. This is a good time to get them involved in the gardening process.

Gardening teaches valuable scientific concepts to young children according to Dr. Shelley Lindauer, early childhood development specialist in the Utah State University College of Family Life. Children can learn about life cycles, how sunlight and water nourish plants and caparison skills.

Lindauer says often part of food that are normally considered garbage can become interesting gardening experiments for children. So, without much expense, you can teach young children gardening concepts and help them understand where the food they eat comes from.

1) Cut off the top (thick end) two inches of a carrot and cut off most of the leaves as well. Place the carrot cut side down in about one inch of water in a dish. After a week or so roots will sprout and the carrot can be planted in sandy soil with about one inch of the top extending above the soil.

An interesting experiment for young children is to plant carrot seeds side by side with the carrot sprouts so they can compare growth. Similar experiments can be done using beets, turnips and parsnips.

2) Seeds from lemons, oranges and grapefruit are often discarded and ignored as actual seeds that produce plants. These of course are not suitable for the Utah climate, but the seeds can be sprouted in pots and transplanted to the garden for the summer.

3) Garlic plants can be easily started from cloves of garlic. Simply peel several small garlic cloves and planting the garden or pot with the pointed end facing up. Plant just deep enough that the tips are barely covered. Garlic sprouts in best in porous soil.

Once the garlic begins to grow, children can snip off the leaves to add to food.

4) Sprouting the many varieties of dried beans can provide children with endless opportunities to compare similarities and differences between plants.

Dry beans should first be soaked overnight. The next day put them in a small jar of wet cotton batting or densely compressed paper towels. Place the beans between the glass and the met

filling material so your children can see the root systems emerge. Transplant to garden or pots when the beans sprouts outgrow the jar.

5) Another easy to sprout vegetable is the sweet potato. Insert toothpicks around the middle and suspend the potato pointed tip down in a glass of water. Maintain the water level in the jar and place in indirect sunlight. Roots should appear in about a week.

For more information, contact your local **USU County Extension office.**

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