

# Growing from Gardening

*What can we learn?*

*The opportunities for children are endless in a garden! Children have the chance to work scientifically as they identify and classify plants; they can explore and consolidate mathematical skills through counting scoops of dirt, filling pots and watering cans or measuring growth. They can be exposed to reading and writing through related stories, books and creative pursuits such as writing a gardening journal. They can experience continued growth in social skills development by working together with other children and supported by educators consider ethical issues as they learn to nurture and care for a living thing.*

## How do I begin?

Gardening with young children needn't be overwhelming nor happen every day or every week. A starting point can be an invitation to children to become curious about gardening.



*Here are three ideas to think about:*

**Get Ready to Dig** - Before 'digging in' with children, think 'Intentional teaching' EYLF Pg 15: what are your goals for the children? How are you going to assist children in their discoveries?

*'Intentional teaching is deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful. Educators are able to actively promote children's learning through worthwhile and challenging experiences and interactions that foster high-level thinking skills.'* EYLF pg 15. In preparation for learning experiences, look through a gardening book with children to find where their interest lies, this will also further assist planning.

It can help to have a few simple supplies on hand to start - a plant or range of books about gardening to share with children can increase interest. You may additionally want to have soil, seeds, cups/pots, watering cans and magnifying glasses collected for when the interest ignites. This will create a vibrant

and flexible *learning environment (EYLF pg 15)* which is responsive to children's interests and abilities. Discover with the children what is important—gardening tools are not necessary at this point and the children can guide educators towards what resourcing may be necessary as their knowledge grows.

**Consider Safety** - As with any learning and teaching opportunity, explore any inherent risks. Be aware of what plants are poisonous; know what is contained in potting soil and what safety precautions are necessary; some seeds are coated with chemicals harmful to young children—read the labels of all materials and source material safety data sheets. Pay close attention to children as they use water and tools. Expectations should be age-appropriate and active supervision is a must! You will also need to consider current water restrictions.

**Am I providing enough challenge?**  
**Am I avoiding frustration?**

**Involvement** - We know children learn through play. *'Play provides opportunities for children to learn as they discover, create, improvise and imagine'*, EYLF pg.15. Regardless of children's ages it is our responsibility as educators to provide many and varied developmentally appropriate opportunities for participation. Participation for an infant will be different from that of a child in an out of school hours care program.



**Tip:** Recycled materials can be used for many gardening experiences. Ice-cream containers and yoghurt tubs make great pots and meat trays can be useful in seed raising. Send a note home to families about what is taking place in their child's room and ask if they have any suggestions or resources they may be able to share. You can also recycle plants!

### Indoor Gardening Ideas

Even in the middle of the cold, dreary months, we can still garden indoors! During the colder months, this gives us a connection with the outdoors when the climate outside may not be conducive to growing a wide variety of plant life. Here is one simple, indoor gardening idea to explore with young children:



**Start a Bean!** *Seeing the growth of a seed through to sprouted roots can raise great interest.*

#### You will need:

- bean seeds (any kind)
- clear container (plastic cups or zip-lock style bags)
- paper towels
- spray bottle of water

Place seeds on paper towels and put in plastic cups or plastic bags and place by a window. Moisten with water; no dirt required! Mist daily with water careful not to over mist—you may get mould. Watch the roots take off!



### Gardening and the Early Years Learning Framework

Outcome 2 of the Early Years Learning Framework, supports children becoming socially responsible and respectful of their environments. Some ways that children demonstrate their respect for the environment could include:

- Speaking to each other about not wasting water when they fill their watering cans at the tap.
- Worrying about withered leaves on a plant.
- Wondering how their plant has gotten so tall.
- Exploring the connection between, land, people, plants and animals.
- Show growing appreciating and care for the natural and constructed environment.



*As educators we can promote this learning in a variety of ways, some of these may include;*

- Asking children what food they would like to try growing and provide them with a variety of resources.
- Wonder with children, how they can make the best use of the water they need to use and why.
- Provide children with a range of natural materials in their environment.
- Look at the curriculum in relation to sustainability.

#### Further ideas can be found:

- [www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au](http://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au)
- [www.waldorflibrary.org/Journal\\_Articles/GW3408.pdf](http://www.waldorflibrary.org/Journal_Articles/GW3408.pdf)
- [www.edibleschoolyard.org](http://www.edibleschoolyard.org)
- [www.ecaconference.com.au/pdf/papers2008/McGiffen\\_Jan.pdf](http://www.ecaconference.com.au/pdf/papers2008/McGiffen_Jan.pdf)

