

Benefits of Gardening



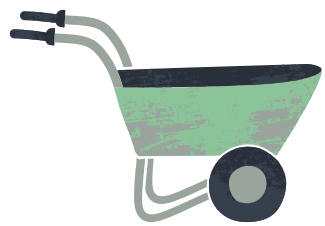
Gardening

Gardening is a great opportunity for sensory-motor exploration for children. The activity supports fine and gross motor muscle development, sequencing, planning, following directions, and sensory stimulation - feeling the dirt, smelling flowers and plants, and tasting fresh fruits and vegetables.



Getting Started

- For sequencing, planning, and following directions, break the task into steps for your child.
- Start with gathering supplies. If able to write, have your child make a list of what will be needed. This can help them stay organized during the task.
- Once all your supplies are gathered, put items that they can safely lift in a wagon or child sized wheelbarrow. This will provide your child with heavy muscle work as they lift, push, or pull materials.
 - Remember, heavy work can be calming and organizing for our bodies.
- Prepare for and enjoy the mess.



Time To Plant

- Planting is a wonderful proprioceptive and tactile experience for children with lots of digging and feeling the dirt - and, yes, even wet mud.
- Have your child start by digging a small hole.
 - If the feeling of dirt is too much for your child, keep a towel nearby to wipe hands off, have them use a shovel, or wear gloves.
- Give your child a spoon to dig in the dirt and scoop with to help improve utensil use.
- You can let your child plant small seeds one by one into the soil promoting a pincer grasp using thumb and index finger.

Remember to Water

- Watering the plants provides multiple opportunities for strengthening muscles and heavy work.
 - Have your child lift and carry a watering can or have your child pull out the garden hose and help wind it up when done.
 - Try squeezing a spray bottle to water a plant to strengthen hands and work the same muscles needed for holding a pencil.
- Your child will also have the opportunity to work on body awareness and force grading- how much do they need to tip the watering can for water to come out, how far and hard do they need to pull the hose?



Care of the Garden

- Weeding facilitates dexterity and grip strength.
- Practice scissor skills by snipping at the grass, weeds, or leaves with age appropriate scissors.
- Encourage your child to get down to the ground to garden or practice tall kneeling, half kneeling, or squatting, to reach for materials.
- While admiring their hard work challenge their balance to have them walk on uneven ground or avoid stepping on plants.
- Make caring for your garden part of your daily routine to help structure the day.

Supporting children where they live, learn, and play.
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