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MUCH TO DO ABOUT GARDENING WITH YOUTH

Dig, Plant and Grow these youth gardening resources – books, internet websites, models for youth gardens, crafts and grants. OH MY!

A garden or gardening program with youth is a journey that requires youth voice and patience.

- ❖ adults learn through the eyes of a child
- ❖ adults are taught to ponder children's ideas for gardening to touch, smell and taste vegetables and herbs
- ❖ adults are challenged to try new ideas voiced by the child to place flowers, herbs and veggies in places perhaps less traditional than adult gardens

Adults need to be coaches and guides giving direction plus ideas/choices such as, which vegetables, herbs and flowers “could” grow well, but never be the dictator.

Children learn by doing and enjoy hands-on projects.

- ❖ moving plants
- ❖ watering deep and low to prevent disease
- ❖ thinning and deadheading
- ❖ spacing and more

Children enjoy creating crafts related to gardening. Encourage the youth to create a garden journal.

- ❖ a sketch pad with 300 or 400 series paper and spiral binder work well
- ❖ search the internet to find websites with free garden grids and pages to print off
- ❖ design the cover and decorate with old seed catalog pictures, seed packages or original artwork
- ❖ decide on the journal's name

They can record notes about their garden research, planning, resources, sources for seeds and plants and the design. Teach the youth how to record planting dates, the progress of the garden, effects or disease on plants from weather, drought and critters. Perhaps show them how to record which seeds and plants did well and what not to plant next year.

Conduct a “Reflection and Evaluation Session” with the children at the end of the season after the garden cleanup.

- ❖ what lessons did you learn in your garden
- ❖ what did you do best
- ❖ what could you do differently to improve your garden next year
- ❖ what do you want to remember for your next gardening project
- ❖ where can you teach what you have learned about gardening

Until next thyme, enjoy coaching and guiding youth in the garden.

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Sheila has conducted research and compiled long lists of gardening with youth books, internet websites, gardening craft ideas and grant resources to share over time in this column. For examples of reflection and evaluation sessions email her at: lavenderlady@comcast.net.

