

February 2017

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!

TIPS ABOUT YOUTH GARDENING

- ❖ With adults as coaches, youth can conduct horticulture research, design and plan the garden, test and amend the soil (foundation for a successful garden), plant the seeds and plants, then water, weed and maintain the garden.
- ❖ Visualize a flower as petals unfold. As the children's garden journeys unfold, each petal represents the processes above plus horticulture and botany components.
- ❖ In addition, lessons, activities and crafts in gardening process infuse curriculum tenets like problem-solving, critical thinking skills, decision-making, creativity/imagination, math, English, and sciences (i.e. horticulture, weather, and botany).

Children learn by doing and enjoy hands-on projects.

- ❖ Use seed catalogs and seed packets as educational tools to teach what seeds/plants look like, planting instructions, hours of sun, and days until harvest or maturation. Their discoveries could be recorded in their garden journal.
- ❖ "Roots, Shoots, Buckets and Boots," by Sharon Lovejoy, Workman Publishing, New York, 1999 is a great book for connecting children to Nature and gardening. For planning the garden, check pages 14-17 for theme gardens (pizza, container, sunflowers, snacking and sipping) complete with plant lists and companion activities.
- ❖ Another outstanding reference book for children and adults is "The Whole Seed Catalog," 2017, Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Co. The book contains the history, vivid photos and descriptions of seeds, plants, and fruits of the harvest plus recipes. Youth love visuals. See veggies, herbs and flowers.

- ❖ Another practical gardening activity is for youth to find yard and household items to repurpose as planters for veggies, herbs and flowers. Boots, old boat, wheelbarrow, boxes, wagons, barrels with needed drainage holes make interesting containers.

Children enjoy creating crafts related to gardening.

- ❖ On page 18 of "Roots, Shoots, Buckets and Boots," see ideas for making plant markers on tongue depressors or flat, smooth stones. Old Venetian blinds from Grandma work well too. Just clean them well and use markers that survive sun and rain. Use waterproof acrylic paint also for decorating and labeling. Youth like painting.

Internet resources abound, just conduct a search with the subject "youth gardening." Some resources are for formal programs in a city, at a nonprofit or a church but many resources and ideas present pieces for adults to replicate with children. Here are a few:

- ❖ Learn2Grow.com (information on flowers, shrubs, trees and more)
- ❖ PbsKids.org (Kids Gardening and try the Hat video "How Trees Make Food")

Until next thyme, enjoy coaching and guiding youth in the garden. Email me at: lavenderlady@comcast.net

Sheila Hamilton-Taylor, Advanced Master Gardener
Member of TGOA Youth Gardening Committee



