

Creative Gardens: Thinking Outside the Garden Box

Overview

Container gardening is a style of gardening that uses various types of containers to grow florals, produce, herbs and more. It's a great way to leverage existing space and upcycled materials in a fun and creative way, while bringing a little bit of nature inside. Take a small step in the world of gardening with a small container garden and see just how far you can flourish!



Take Action

Plan your harvest. Make a list of the different herbs, fruits and veggies you are interested in growing. Understand the unique needs of each plant to determine the amount of sunlight needed, type of soil and watering schedule. This will set you up for success in the beginning when thinking about a location and what plants can be planted near one another.

Choose a location. Take time to notice where the sunlight comes in the room where you are wanting to house your container garden. Pay attention to the timing and duration of the sunlight. Keep a log over a week or month and have children determine the best space based on the data they collect.

Choose the type of container. Container gardens can be as creative or unique as you would like them. Think about the spaces you have available and then have fun with it!

- Windowsill planters or pots - practical and easy to move around.

- Mason jars or other glass containers – allow you to see the roots as your plants grow.
- Upcycled materials (milk cartons, tin cans, etc.) – helps to show kindness to the earth by reusing something on hand. [Here's a fun example](#) using upcycled juice cartons!

Gather your materials. Choose your seeds and select the soil. Container gardens thrive best with lightweight organic potting soil. Create a gardener's kit with all of the tools and resources in one handy place. Some things to include:

- Gardening gloves
- Hand trowels
- Small spading forks
- Small round points shovels
- Watering can
- Wooden stakes to label plants

Plant with love. While planting, encourage students to be more aware of the present moment and their surroundings. Encourage them to connect with the earth and the practice of gardening as a way to feel calm and in tune with their feelings. Discuss the process of going from a seedling to a fresh cucumber or juicy tomato and all the steps that took place during that journey.

Social Emotional Health Highlights

Activities such as these help children explore...

Self-Awareness: Harvesting fruits and veggies that children have worked so hard to grow is the perfect opportunity for students to celebrate the success of their own hard work. A school garden provides chances for children to be a part of something bigger than themselves and gain self-confidence and self-efficacy by recognizing their capacity to use their skills to achieve their goals. Students will develop a sense of ownership for their health when they experience growing their own food from seed to yum!

Responsible Decision Making: Growing veggies requires patience, evaluation, and reflection. Students can work together to problem solve and analyze solutions to assure that all of the plants in the garden reach their fullest potential. Gardens provide ample opportunities to teach children about responsibilities in caretaking and problem solving.

Tips



Determine early on if you plan to transplant spouts outside.

Container gardens are great for getting plants started indoor, especially during the off season.



Be mindful of the plants needs!

Just like us, not enough or too much water can make as feel a little off. Small containers can be overwatered and can dry out over long breaks or weekends.

Similarly, if the plants are receiving too much or too little sunshine, they may not thrive.



Whether your garden is growing alongside the playground or a classroom windowsill, gardening is a great place to practice mindfulness and encourage creative thinking. Invite children to use their senses to experience the different textures, smells and sounds. Remind children that gardening can sometimes be tough and getting the balance just right can take time. Help them experience the whole process and celebrate the small achievements along the way.



For more activities and ideas like this one, be sure to [sign up for our news and updates](#). And if you like what you see, please [donate to support our work](#) creating more ways to help build a healthier future for kids.

School Garden

A school garden is a wonderful way for students to physically connect with nutrition education, understand the process of growing healthy foods, and recognize environmental stewardship.

April Showers Bring May Veggies

School gardens are a fantastic way to transition a more traditional classroom to an outdoor, experiential learning opportunity centered on student engagement and critical thinking.

Farm to School

Farm to school is a national movement that helps connect kids to healthy, local food while also supporting local farmers and building communities.

Celebrate National Farm to School Month

From taste tests in the cafeteria and nutrition education activities in the classrooms, to farm visits and school garden harvest parties, join the celebration!