



# *Meat the Future*

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## **"Gardening -- A Family Affair"**

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It's still cold and brown outside, but believe it or not – it's the perfect time to start planning a summer garden! And this year, why not make that garden a family affair?

There are so many benefits associated with getting those little hands in the soil. I recently read an article that shared people who garden are less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety. The article eluded to the fact that whether it be the sunshine or simply watching your efforts grow before your eyes, gardening is good for the soul and our mental health. Here are a few more reason we believe in the power of gardening for our kiddos!

1. **Physical Activity:** Get those little bodies out and get them moving!
2. **Enjoy the Outdoors:** Staying off of the devices and experiencing what nature has to offer can build our youth stronger – both physically and mentally!
3. **Family Time:** What more needs to be said?
4. **Helps Us Learn Where our Food Comes From:** When you buy a bell pepper from the grocery store, it wasn't grown there! Gardening helps us see the connection between the growth process of a pepper plant, how it started from a seed, requires attention and the right time to harvest it. It helps us appreciate the people who grow our food for us!
5. **Encourage Healthy Eating:** Fruits and vegetables are essential to a healthy diet as they provide vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients. It is common for us to enjoy eating fruits and vegetables more if they are grown in our garden and fresh!
6. **Give Youth the Opportunity to Grow and Care for Something:** My personal favorite! Not only does this instill life skills in our youth such as responsibility, dedication, time management, etc., it also allows them to feel a sense of accomplishment as they see something through from beginning to end.

## "Gardening -- A Family Affair", Cont.

If I've won you over at this point, here are a few tips to consider as you plan your family gardening adventure!

- Consult with an expert neighbor, a family member, a local nursery, or stop by your local Extension Office to find out what plants will grow best where you live. But, ultimately let your kiddos help plan what you will have in the garden this year!
- If you have limited outdoor space, planting in containers is a good way to try out gardening.
- If you will be planting directly in the ground, now is the time to perform a soil test to be certain your seed bed has all of the nutrients it needs to be successful. Come see us at your local Twin Creeks Extension Office and we can certainly help with this!
- Start your plants from seed, purchase seedlings, or buy plants later this spring to transplant – it's totally up to you!
- Kids can certainly help with tasks such as: collecting sticks and other debris, digging holes for seeds or plants, harvest fruits or vegetables from the garden, assist with spreading mulch, water plants with a watering can or hose, weed (with good instructions on what to pluck and what to keep). Always have adult supervision present and keep in mind that working on specific projects is best if done in short windows – for example 15 minutes to pull weeds in a designated area.
- Keep tools handy that are child appropriate. They will be excited to utilize the same equipment you are, but in their own size!

Always educate your child throughout the gardening process. You will be surprised to see how quickly their minds grow, right alongside your family garden!

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