

Lettuce Learn



Principles of Developmentally Appropriate Gardening

Adapted from Stoecklin: www.whitehutchinson.com/children/articles/gardening.shtml

1) Children are active learners

- Involve children in hands-on interaction
- Play and discovery over imparting knowledge
- direct sensory experience rather than conceptual generalization
- avoid creating activities from adult perspective
- allow children to collect, touch, taste, smell

2) Development occurs in children in an orderly sequence during first 9 years

- Understand differing cognitive capabilities and psychological needs of the age group you're working with

3) Present experiences in increasingly complex and organized ways

- younger than 7-8= extremely visual because lack of reading skill = utilize pictures/visuals instead of words (i.e. use a prop when instructing to "plant in rows").
- General capacity for short-term memory: Adults = 7 chunks; 7-year-olds = 6 chunks; Preschoolers = 5 chunks of information .

4) Encourage children to practice their new gardening skills beyond the classroom

- Support parents in efforts to bring gardening home: provide information on *why* it's important and tools to help it work at home (send home activity information, seed, peat pot, and soil instead of sending just a seed).

5) Vary your instruction/activities to reach different modalities of learning

- Many different learning styles: visual, auditory, tactile
- Gardner's multiple intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal and naturalistic (ability to read the natural environment).
- "A variety of activities will allow children time to use their preferred modes of learning and also provide time for them to develop in areas where they might not be as strong."

¹ Bredekamp, Sue and Copple, Carol, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, Washington, D.C., National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1997.

Goals of Developmentally Appropriate Gardening

1) Teach environmental stewardship

- Value formation begins at age 2, 3, and 4: it's more difficult to teach a 7-year-old to kindly regard nature if they haven't had the opportunity to explore the wonders of trees, bushes, flowers, and dirt in their early years.
- Research in the new fields of eco-psychology and evolutionary psychology show that too little time in nature can lead to biophobia—an aversion to nature, where a child's first impulse when they see a bug or dirt is disgust and to kill or get rid of it.

"Children must be allowed time in their early years to interact with nature and living elements before they can understand it well enough to want to preserve it."

2) Provide activities for children to practice personal growth and social skills

- easy to take pride in garden accomplishments: even watering
- Allowing children to work together to reach common goal
- creativity, problem solving and teamwork in the garden

3) Provide multi-disciplinary, active learning

- Math: charting, mapping, graphing and counting
- Reading & writing: dictation, creating signage, storybook making, literature connections
- Social studies: foods of other cultures, feeding the homeless, map-making
- Art: garden design, identifying colors and patterns, creating drawings, painting, papermaking, creating collages

4) Teach about nutrition and health

- Kids will try what they grow!

5) Provide opportunities for science education

- Interdependent plant and animal needs, photosynthesis, seed production, harmful and beneficial insects, composting, and much more!

6) Show children that gardening is fun and can be used later in life.

- Share the pleasures of digging and planting and harvesting!

