

The Grapevine

Gardening with Kids

Some of my earliest memories involve being around plants and helping in the gardening. This tradition is one that I want to pass on to my son as he grows up. Gardens can be a wonderful place for kids. They provide a variety of opportunities to learn, play and have fun. Studies have found that introducing youth to gardening encourages them to eat a wider variety of fruits and veggies they haven't tried before and the garden is a wonderful place to mix education and fun. Teaching youth about gardening doesn't have to be limited to just the outdoors and our normal growing season, teaching youth how to take care of houseplants can teach a variety of lessons as well. Here are some tips on involving your kids in the garden and with plants.

One of the first lessons I learned was to start small and set realistic goals with kids and gardening. Break tasks down into smaller chunks, especially with young kids, to fit their attention span and interest levels. That might mean you only plant one row of corn at a time instead of the whole section or you only water a few plants indoors at a time. Setting realistic goals and activities will help you as the adult have fun and the kids have fun. When I first started gardening with my then toddler I skipped this step and the first few times we were in the garden ended in frustration on my part. Once I adjusted my expectations our ventures into the garden became fun for everyone. Your role in the garden should be as a facilitator rather than a dictator telling them how to do everything. Show the kids what you want done then walk them through and let them do it. There will be some messes but both of you will learn more from the messes than anything else.



Give your child a job. Kids, especially young kids love to help and to have a task that is theirs to do. Pick a task that will fit your child's age and abilities, for example planting small seeds is probably not a good choice for a young child while planting potatoes or pumpkin seeds would work. Large seeds could be boring for an older child but smaller seeds can add a challenge that will keep their attention. Pick something that won't impact the garden if they do mess up on accident. Other options of tasks include pulling weeds, shredding paper for mulch, watering or putting dirt in flower pots. At home my little guy loves to water so he has his own watering can and he waters the bigger plants that will tolerate getting a bit too much every once in a while.

As kids get older give them ownership in their garden. An excellent option is to give kids a small portion of the garden that is theirs for the summer. They get to pick what they want to grow then maintain that portion of the garden through out the growing season. Once the produce is ready to pick they get to choose where it goes once it's harvested or how they want to eat it. Another way to give ownership is to put one kid in charge of a task such as running the wheel barrow or watering. As kids get older remember that gardening may become "uncool" and working with them one on one may work better than in a group.



Gardening should be a fun and educational activity for kids. Be sure to reflect with the kids after completing an activity. Depending on the age group this reflection period could be as simple as asking what was planted or what we did. As you work with your kids try to foster a sense of discovery and hands-on activities. Gardening can become dull and boring, especially toward the end of the growing season but take the time to encourage their natural curiosity. If you don't know the answer to a question, take time to look it up and read books on gardening. Remember that in the garden you are their role model and what you do they will follow. Remember to show them how to be safe in the garden and read the labels of any products you are using. Go out and get dirty with your kids this summer because education shouldn't be limited to the classroom. Happy Growing!!!

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Weed of the Week-



This week's weed of the week is field bindweed. This member of the morning glory family is also called Creeping Jenny and is a native of Eurasia that was first introduced to the US via contaminated field and garden seed in the mid 1700's. It is found in every state in the US and is listed as a noxious weed in 22 states total. Field bindweed is a perennial weed that has an extensive and deep fibrous root system that can reproduce both by the roots and also via seed. Each field bindweed plant can produce up to 600 seeds of which 90% are viable, 25% will germinate in the first year and the seeds are viable in the ground for 60 years or more. One of the reasons field bindweed is challenging to control is its ability to reproduce by pieces of the roots.

The root system can go up to 20 feet in the ground and the plant can regrow from a root bud up to 14 feet below the ground. There are a couple options when trying to manage this weed. The first is mechanical control and involves hand pulling seedlings and young plants along with hoeing or tilling every couple weeks during the growing season. Using mulch or weed mat in flower beds or gardens can help slow the spread by reducing the amount of sunlight that reaches the ground. There are biological controls available however they have unfortunately not been very effective and are hard to establish. Often chemical treatment is the best bet but it will have to be continued for several years till the seed and root reserves have been exhausted. Field bindweed is a tough customer, but with time and persistence it can be eradicated.

Disease of the Week

This week we are switching it up with a disease of the week. This week we are talking about Cedar-Apple Rust. This fungal disease has a complex life cycle over a two year period as it rotates between two different hosts. This spring we have had several calls about the orange gelatinous balls that are showing up on cedar trees. The needles of an Eastern red or ornamental cedar are infected with the fungal disease between June and September by spores that are emitted from apple trees. The following summer, small green galls form on the cedar tree and grow till the following spring when they will mature into brown balls that are approximately 2" in diameter. The picture to the right shows what we are seeing right now on the trees. After spending almost 2 years on cedar trees, the spores emitted from the orange goo will float up to 3 miles till they land on the damp leaves or fruit of an apple or fruit



tree where they form the lesions similar to the picture on the left that we see. While the Cedar tree doesn't appear to have any negative impacts from this disease the fruit trees can be killed with several years of severe infections. Control can be difficult but can be achieved. The first option is to remove all the hosts near enough to cause an infection which may or may not be an option if you live in town. If removing the hosts is not an option, try to remove the galls you can see from cedar trees as they grow and mature. The final method of control is to use a fungicide on the apple trees starting at bloom time and continuing applications every 7 days till the spore spreading from the cedar trees has stopped. You can also spray the cedar trees with fungicide from June till September on 7-14 day intervals depending on the chemical you are using. Several chemicals, including triforine, propiconazole, myclobutanil, and triadimefon are effective in controlling rust diseases.



Reminders-

- Wait until about mid-June to plant winter squash and pumpkins so they mature in cooler fall weather.
- Transplant annual flowers when soil temperature reaches 65 degrees.
- Mound soil around potato plants to make sure tubers aren't exposed. Sunlight hitting tubers will cause them to turn green.
- Check fruit trees for fruit. Multiple frost events this spring may have eliminated fruit on apricots, peaches and plums but some made it through. Apples and pears may have been thinned but should bear a good crop through much of the state. If no fruit, sprays may not be needed except for the leaf disease on apples such as cedar-apple rust, apple scab and powdery mildew.
- With the hot temperatures, be sure to keep an eye on newly planted vegetables or annuals, especially if they haven't been hardened off.

Upcoming Events

- *May 12, 2022: Gardening Basics- Augusta Community Garden (1301 Ohio Street) 6:30 pm*
Are you a new gardener who is not sure how to get started or are you struggling with your garden? Join us at the Augusta Community Garden for a demonstration of the basics of gardening, how to get started with raised bed gardening, composting and get some of your questions or issues answered. Registration isn't necessary. Parking is available on 14th Ave.
- *June 1, 2022: Organic Pest Management for Vegetable Gardens*
The ideal weather conditions for peak vegetable crop production will also generate a rise in garden pests, weeds, and disease. As these pests plague the garden, even the most avid organic grower may become disheartened. Join Zac Hoppenstedt, Johnson County Horticulture Extension Agent, to learn about organic controls available to the home gardener, as well as strategic approaches to help prevent garden problems. For more information on KSRE Garden Hour [click here](#).