



INVOLVING YOUTH

Why it is important for kids to grow food:

Most youth, particularly urban youth, have little consciousness of where food comes from. An understanding of food values and origins is of lifelong importance, especially as diabetes, heart, disease, cancer, etc. are increasingly linked to the way food is grown and processed. Kids learn what to like, so it's never too early to offer them new tastes & ideas.

Teaching kids about growing vegetables is a great step towards helping them understand food systems and why local food and a balanced diet are important (and tasty)! Gardens also provide a safe place for youth to be outside and a practical classroom for teaching about nutrition and the environment.

Growing food in an urban community setting also integrates the priorities of shared public resources, community development and the greening of urban spaces.

Goals:

Play and have fun while supplementing traditional curriculum and teaching students to enjoy the outdoors, value nature, and live healthfully.

- Dig, water, grow, count, measure, observe, talk, sing in the garden
- Read, write, draw, paint, imagine in an applied learning setting
 - Help youth develop a positive relationship with local food:
- Where Food Comes From – understanding how things grow and get into your body
 - What's on the table – its origins
 - How did it get there
 - Urban growing – good & bad
 - DC metropolitan farms – what can & can't grow in this region
 - Far-away foods – what it takes to grow a lot at once and what it take to get them here—"Food Miles"

- What's in Food – Help develop an understanding of a balanced diet and ‘whole’ foods
 - What's on your table – What part of the plant are you eating?
 - **Root:** Carrot, **Stem:** Celery, **Flower:** Broccoli, **Leaf:** Lettuce
 - Nutrition
 - What the body needs
 - Cooking – Learning simple preparation methods for fresh foods and herbs
 - Reading instructions, measuring, etc.
 - Helps kids experiment, explore, and learn to appreciate fresh, healthy foods
- 2. Help kids understand how food, nature, their health (and life), and even the city are all connected:
 - Science
 - Water cycle
 - Waste: Recycling & composting
 - Physical: Layers, composition, texture of soil
 - Using Charts: Sun, Moon, Temperature (USDA Hardiness Zone)
 - Species: Observing insects, worms, birds, butterflies, moths, etc.
 - Experimenting
 - Take home harvest
 - Identifying plants, tracking and predicting growth
 - Discovering
 - Writing, drawing, seeing, thinking about nature in the city
- 3. Get kids outside in the city.
 - Create a safe place for kids and encourage kids to feel they have a stake in their community spaces and that they can/are positively impacting the environment.
 - Give kids a chance to spend time outdoors and connect to their surroundings.