



Agriculture Program

The TechRen Foundation agriculture program will help promote the use of gardening to achieve learning objectives and support the mental, emotional, and social development of youth. The program will address:

- Multiple learning styles
- Provide opportunities for interdisciplinary lessons
- Improve environmental attitudes
- Promote good nutrition and exercise
- Teach patience and responsibility
- Instill a positive work ethic
- Increase participants' self-esteem
- Build social relationships
- Improve teamwork
- Beautify the environment

Environmental Stewardship

A garden is a powerful environmental education tool. Participants have an opportunity to engage in agricultural practices on a small scale, learning about the responsibilities and impacts of land cultivation. They explore the web of interactions among the living and non-living players that sustain life.

Community and Social Development

Community and social development lessons do not receive the attention of academic achievement, but they are as crucial to the survival of our country as reading and writing. Learning how to take responsibility for their environment and develop a strong sense of community can ensure the continuation of our society.

A Healthy Lifestyle

Beyond academics, the garden provides broader life lessons including contributing to students' knowledge of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Primary Garden Tools

Set of 4 long-handled, real garden tools

Having the proper size tools makes planting and maintaining a garden easy and enjoyable for children. These lightweight tools are intended for the youngest gardeners only.

With steel heads mounted on hardwood handles, these tools are designed to do the job. Colors may vary.

Set includes:

Shovel (SC610): 36", Hoe (SC612): 33", Garden Rake (SC614): 31", Metal Leaf Rake (SC616): 37"

Time to plant

The initial soil prep and planting takes a little time, maybe (4) hours, then after that, a daily walk around of a few minutes, pulling weeds, watering, etc. plus harvest time. 2-4 Hours per week max.

1. Focus on making it fun and exciting.

When participants realize how many interesting, intriguing and even gross things there are to be involved in, they'll be more likely to want to get involved. Whenever planning anything, work out the fun angle, to keep your participants interest engaged.

2. Kit it out.

A big part of the fun is having the right tools and there are many gardening tools made in various sizes, and in wonderful colors. Colorful tools, while not essential, are a helpful way to encourage participants to join in. Gardening gloves often come in wonderful colors and patterns too and each participants should have a pair of his or her own.

- Buy a pretty watering can which suits the size and strength of the individual. This will encourage him or her to keep watering the growing plants.
- Show them how to clean and put away tools after use. Make this easy and fun too a bit of splashing about should be part of the cleaning chores

3. Choose plants that are easy to grow.

While it's important to involve your participants in choosing the plants, make sure that the choice is from plants likely to be as trouble-free as possible, especially for beginner gardeners. Also choose a few plants that will produce a delicious edible harvest to pick and take straight to the table from the garden. Some good starter choices include:

- Sunflowers
- Radishes
- Squash
- Tomatoes (from seedlings)
- Lettuces
- Peas and beans
- Sweet peas, poppies, alyssum, marigolds, pansies or nasturtiums.

4. **Find your spot:**

To get started, all you need is a bare patch of ground in a sunny place. To make planting easier, prepare the spot by shoveling weeds out of the way and turning the soil lightly with a shovel.

5. **Plan the planting space:**

Allow the participant to decide where plants go in a flowerbed, although they don't mind a few suggestions (tall plants in the back, for example).

6. **Show your participants the basics of planting seeds and seedlings in the ground.**

Do the hard work of tilling the soil and adding the nutrients for them they can learn about that later. For now, give them the joy of planting, watering and waiting for their little plants to sprout.

- To make the job even easier by planting the seeds in cardboard egg cartons. When it comes time to transfer the seedling (or the seed) to the soil, cut out each little egg holding portion and let the participants plant the whole thing into the ground. The carton will disintegrate and no seeds or seedlings get lost in the transition.

7. **Make things for the garden.**

Get crafty and recycle, repurpose and remake things that can serve as decorations or tools in the garden. There are lots of possibilities, including:

- Turning an old tire into a garden bed or plant protector.
- Making herb or plant markers from iced confectionery sticks. Painting a planter or flowerpot container in bright colors and designs. Be sure to say how pretty their own flowers would look inside it.
- Make a scarecrow to frighten away the birds; or make bird frighteners using old CDs, bits of unwanted foil and clothing, etc.
- Make a dangling decoration from shells, beads and pebbles, using thread or fishing line.
- Turn coconut shell halves into seedling pots clean the inside, paint the outside like a face and anything that sprouts will seem like hair.
- Make a bird feeder

8. **Leave the labels:**

A few labels are useful. Labels help the participants remember the names of plants. Labels in the individual's handwriting will provide a feeling of accomplishment to anyone who happens to see the flower/plant garden and adds to the feeling of ownership.

9. **Water, water, and water:**

When the flowers are all planted, water them well: in any garden, thorough watering helps plants get off to a good start, and in a spot that might not receive regular attention, it's even more important. The heat-loving flowers will take off as the weather warms up. In really dry weather, round up the kids and a couple of watering cans, and go check on your outpost of bloom.

10. **Keep gardening even when the season changes.**

Bring the garden indoors for winter, so that they can still enjoy the benefits of growing plants and learn how some plants can actually thrive in an indoor environment. Good choices include a small herb garden, a windowsill planter, a terrarium built in an unwanted fish tank, or a window box.

- Another idea for an indoor growing project is to grow a bulb in a bottle. Fill a bottle with water and place a hyacinth bulb at the top. Task them to keep the water level topped off and to wait for roots to develop. As the roots come on, tell them to be patient for the flowers to appear. You get both a gardening lesson and a beautiful table centerpiece from the one project!

11. **Acknowledge the place of the digital era in gardening.** Computers and electronic gadgets can be hard to get them off sometimes. However, you can make the most of their affinity for all things electronic and have them download a suitable gardening app or two, and by doing research about their garden and its plants online. Gardening calendars are another useful tool found in many online gardening sites. As they get better at gardening use the internet to search for harder garden projects, like making a sundial, building a chicken coop or rigging up a solar power warming pad. Encourage the exchange of knowledge online into real achievements in the garden this is a good lesson in ensuring that they see the computer as a tool in wider life activities.