

It's All About Balance: Eat Smart, Move More, Rest Well

## 4 Fun Ways to Enjoy a Family Garden

### Start small—try a salad bowl garden.

If you have been gardening for years, you know of how much work you can take on. If you have never been much of a gardener, start small. Use containers or a few square feet in the yard. Start with easy-to-grow items for salads. Try a variety of leaf lettuces, some radishes, a cherry tomato plant and a few herbs (such as parsley and basil). Window boxes and other containers (clean bleach or milk bottles with tops cut off) work especially well for kids.

### Choose child-size tools and produce.

Children do best with things that fit well in their hands. Get child-sized hoes, rakes and shovels at a nursery or garden center. Try to find strong, real looking tools so that little ones feel like real gardeners. Can't afford new tools this summer? Large recycled plastic spoons from the kitchen work great in containers. Look for baby vegetable plants. Miniature corn, radishes, tomatoes and zucchini are just the right size for small eaters!



### Be prepared for less than perfect.

Let's face it! Gardening can be messy business. And, most children love to dig in dirt. Save a small area for digging, even after planting is complete. It is important for children to feel like the garden is really theirs. Be willing to put up with crooked rows and mixed plantings. Children can also get attached to their weeds and want to care for them right along with the veggies. Bottom line—it does not have to look perfect to produce perfectly tasty produce!

### Make gardening an outdoor adventure.

The most important part of family gardening is spending active time together. You are away from TVs, DVDs, video games, computers and cell phones. Have a realistic vision about what children will do in the garden and about how much produce you may actually get. You can always find a farmer's market if you need to. Take time to smell the herbs, roll in the grass and run in the sprinkler. When you need a break, leave the garden behind for a walk around the neighborhood.

**Need some gardening tips from the experts?** Good gardening advice is as close as your local library, bookstore or computer. Check the children's bookshelves for guides like *Ready, Set, Grow! A Kid's Guide to Gardening* (by Rebecca Spohn) or *Kids Garden!* (by Avery Hart and Paul Mantell). For North Carolina specific tips, call your county extension agent or go to [www.successfulgardener.org/](http://www.successfulgardener.org/).



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