



Volume 23

April 2012

Number 4

# parent pages



Gardening is a great way to get kids digging in the dirt, learning how things grow, and discovering the benefits and detriments of the insects they love to watch. When kids garden, they connect with nature, get exercise, learn about planning and patience, and, of course, reap the benefits of growing fresh and tasty food.

Many veggies and fruits can be grown in containers on a small patio or even on a windowsill, so a garden plot in the backyard is not necessary. More and more cities are utilizing empty urban spaces for community gardens, where folks can come together and garden a plot of land.

Good soil is the foundation for good gardens. It consists of three parts in equal ratio: soil, peat moss, and perlite. You can mix it up yourself or purchase quality potting soil at your local nursery.

## Indoor or Outdoor Container Gardens

If you want to start small, choose a couple of seeds or plants that grow well in containers. Punch holes in the bottom of a container for excess

water, fill the container with soil, and place it in a well-lit space. Encourage your child to come up with some creative ideas for containers.



## Outdoor Gardens

If planting outside, set aside an area for children to have their own plots. A sandbox that is no longer needed is a great way to reuse the space. Set kids up for success from the beginning by providing rich soil and locating the garden in a good spot. They won't always remember to water, they may mistake the real plant for a weed, and their rows may not be in straight lines, but it's important to relax a bit and know that both the successes and failures of gardening can teach valuable lessons.

Allow kids to use real gardening tools. High-quality, child-size garden tools will last for many seasons. Using adult trowels and hand rakes will teach kids how real tools work. Plastic tools crack

and break over time and can be frustrating for the young gardener. Those are better suited for pretend play in the sandbox.

To get the most out of your gardening experience, choose a mixture of seeds. Plant some things that grow quickly and some that require patience. Select plants that grow both below the ground and above the ground. Carrots offer a nice surprise when kids pull them out of the ground, but it's also fun to pick a batch of lettuce or sample a juicy strawberry. While some veggies grow evenly in nice rows, others such as pumpkins and squash grow all over the place and need lots of space.

## Great plants for kids' crops:

- Lettuce
- Strawberries
- Green onions or chives
- Beans and peas
- Squash, pumpkins, and cucumbers

## Try these garden-related activities:

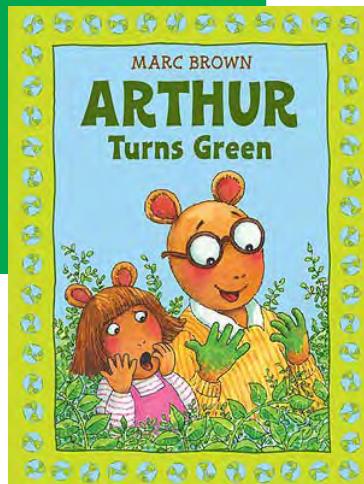
- Gather worms after a rain to put in your soil
- Build scarecrows
- Learn about creating compost
- Create a garden sign.



# PERSONAL PARENTING

## Share a Great Book: *Arthur Turns Green*

Arthur, that adorable glasses-wearing aardvark from the beloved books and the PBS television series, is at it again. After almost a decade, author Marc Brown has come up with an adventure that will teach your kids all kinds of ways to go green, from turning off the lights when they're not needed to recycling bottles and cans.



### Flip-It Art

Arthur would love this art suggestion. Children sometimes don't realize that there are two sides to every sheet of paper. Show them how to write and draw on one side, and then flip the paper over and draw on the other side, too! Explain that by saving paper, we save trees.

## Toddlers Creed



If I want it, it's mine.  
If I give it to you and change my mind  
later, it's mine.  
If I can take it away from you, it's mine.  
If it's mine, it will never belong anybody  
elsno matter what.  
If we are building something together, all  
the pieces are mine.  
If it looks just like mine, it is mine.

Anonymous

## Bring Your Own Stuff

When you find yourself heading to a place where you and your child will be confined for a while—think doctor's or dentist's offices—it's wise to bring your own toys.

Germs on toys may be passed from one child to another.

Take along some small toys your child enjoys. Crayons, paper, and books are always good choices, too.



## Recycle Egg Cartons and Seeds

This seed-sorting activity is the perfect way to recycle egg cartons and use up those seeds you didn't quite get around to planting last year. You will need a variety of seeds that look different such as sunflower seeds, popcorn seeds, pumpkin seeds, or nasturtium seeds.

When you've selected your seeds, glue one in the bottom of each cup in the egg carton. Place the remaining seeds in a small bowl and help your child decide where the seeds go. This is a great game for teaching sorting and classifying—skills all kids need as they learn to perceive subtle differences.

## Treat Yourself to a Smoothie

Why serve the same old snacks and desserts when smoothies are easy to whip up?

- These recipes are great for breakfast too. After blending, pour into two small glasses and serve.

### Peaches and Cream Smoothie

1 cup low-fat milk  
2 tsp. honey  
1 sliced ripe banana  
1/4 cup sliced canned or fresh peaches  
Dash vanilla extract  
2 ice cubes

Place ingredients in a blender and whirl until frothy.

# Coloring: A Cure for Cabin Fever



## Fun Things to Do with Crayons

- \* Color to music. Each time the music stops, turn the paper to another position.
- \* Vary the pressure on a crayon from very, very light to medium to very, very heavy.
- \* Color a picture with only pastel crayons.
- \* Color a picture using only primary colors.
- \* Color a picture with crayons, and then polish portions of the picture with an old sock or a tissue for a shiny effect.
- \* Color with your right hand, then color with your left hand.
- \* Hold a crayon in each hand and color with both at the same time.
- \* Bundle three or four crayons together with a rubber band to draw with a multicolor effect.
- \* Place crayons in a line end to end. Place crayons in a sunburst pattern.
- \* Examine and compare the three sizes of crayons: Regular, Jumbo, and So Big.
- \* Sort by primary colors: red, blue, yellow, and green. Now place all of the blacks, browns, whites, and grays together.
- \* Make dots, lines, swirls, rubbings, and scribbles on the same sheet of paper.
- \* Color around the lines of drawings in a coloring book instead of inside the lines.

## Things to Create with Colors

- Book cover
- Place mat
- Picture frame
- Tablecloth
- Lunch bag
- Greeting card

Coloring brings back great memories for most parents. Do you remember opening your brand-new box of crayons—from the first box of eight primary colors to the ultimate box of 64, complete with a sharpener? Then came the glitter crayons, the silly scents, and the metallics.

Obviously, crayons are still opening the doors to creativity for children around the world. **Coloring is fun.** It's creative and relaxing, and it's for all ages.

## Fun Facts

- ✓ Crayola crayons have been around since 1803.
- ✓ The first box of Crayola crayons sold in 1903 for a nickel and included the same colors that are available today.
- ✓ According to research, the scent of Crayola crayons is among the 20 most recognizable.
- ✓ In February 1996, the 100 billionth Crayola crayon was made by Fred Rogers of Mr. Roger's neighborhood.
- ✓ An average of 12 million Crayola crayons are produced daily. That's enough to circle the globe six times!
- ✓ Sixteen new colors were added in 1993-- two of them are "macaroni and cheese" and "tickle me pink." Twenty-four new colors were added in 1998. Two of them are "fuzzy wuzzy brown" and "cotton candy."

## Name That Color

Play these games with your child.

Take a look at a box of crayons and read all of the names.

If you could name a color, what would it be? Pick a color, draw something, and guess the name of the color that was used.

Name a color after a pet: Doggone Brown, Goldfish Yellow

