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physical activity
self-assessment
FOR child care

Get the Scoop on Gardening from your Pennsylvania Neighbors!



There is more than one way to grow a garden! Take a look at these amazing examples from child care programs across the state! You can also find these stories and more on the Keystone Kids Go Website!

[Visit the website](#)

You can also learn more about starting a preschool garden [HERE!](#)

Garden Beds and Container Gardens

Discovery Zone Learning Center Delaware County, PA



We had a small space to utilize for our garden, so this was the perfect solution for us. A disadvantage we found was that the kids weren't able to reach the middle of the raised bed to be able to help water, but other than that it worked really well for our center.

We grew lettuce, cucumbers, squash, basil, egg plant, cherry tomatoes, peppers and flowers.

The children helped with the planting of some of the seeds, then they transplanted the small seedlings to larger pots outside. They also helped water the plants and picked some of the vegetables to use for salads at lunch.

When we were able to share some of the harvest with our families and staff, it made us happy that we planted this tiny garden!





York County, PA

Our “Sprout Learning Garden” was a project that was completely funded and created by the York Leadership Training Program (LTP). Volunteers from LTP cleared out the area for the garden, put up fencing, built box containers and planted all of the fruits, vegetables and herbs.

We had the following in our garden: blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, green beans, cucumbers, peas, bell peppers, brussels sprouts, carrots, lettuce, swiss chard and sweet potatoes. In the herb containers, we had parsley, sage, thyme, rosemary and mint.



The children in our Academy of Early Learning, Discovery School-Age Program and Summer Camp enjoyed watering and weeding the garden, and then picking and eating what grew.

Learn-in-Play Day Care Delaware County, PA

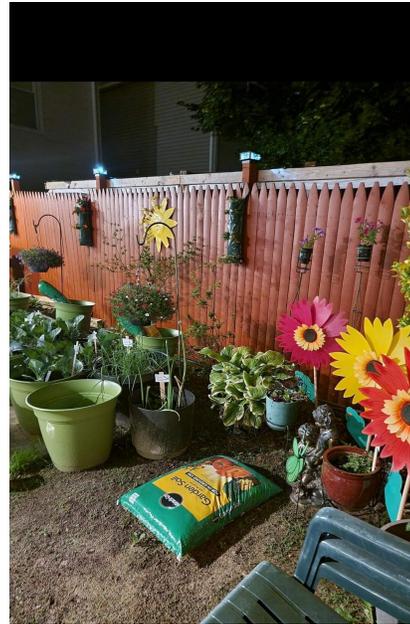


We have a flower pot garden and two garden beds. This garden is advantageous as an alternative for growing vegetables and herbs on concrete. The children enjoy putting the soil in the pots and planting. They all loved to water the plants. Purposeful waterplay!

The veteran children look forward to planting each year. One six-year-old boy said I was nasty for eating out of the backyard. Now he understands the origin of his food. They all like taking their harvest home and enjoy it at daycare.

We visit a local orchard and farmers market a few times throughout the year. It's also a place the families love to go to for an outing. This year we picked delicious strawberries and purchased other fresh fruits and vegetables. This venue allows visitors to pick pumpkins, apples, and other farm-grown foods. I encourage parents to buy from local growers.

We grew kale, broccoli, swiss chard, red cabbage, green peppers, red peppers, orange peppers, jalapeno peppers, cherry tomatoes, onions, rosemary, basil, parsley, thyme, sage, oregano, peppermint, spearmint, stevia, cilantro, dill, tarragon, chives, and green onions. I've attached some pictures without the children where we "grow" and play.



Trinity Cooperative Day Nursery - TCDN Delaware County, PA

We created an outdoor garden bed. The advantages were adequate fenced-in space within our playground to create a garden, as well as materials/resources at hand to be able to do this. A semi-disadvantage was mainly time constraints/maintenance. The garden often grew out of control, and since we are still remaining in our classroom pods for outdoor time, we are somewhat limited for the amount of time we can spend outside, tending to the garden.

We grew green beans, tomatoes, mint, basil, pumpkins, carrots, and a failed blueberry bush! Children helped with planting, weeding, and watering. They especially loved picking the ripened veggies and taste-testing!

Watching the children sift through the plants to find ripened beans and tomatoes was exciting. They were so proud of the results and loved washing the beans in the water fountain to taste them raw. We were able to have some of the beans cooked and served along side our pasta at lunch, too! It was worth it for that "Farm to Table" experience.



State College KinderCare Centre County, PA

Our parents also enjoyed the over abundance of tomatoes, green beans and squash. Our chef did a great job of cooking the vegetables and having the children help harvest them.

The fencing was part of our playground. We purchased the lumber at Lowe's and had the sod/compost mix delivered. The children planted seeds in the rooms and then transferred them to the garden. The classrooms take turns weeding and watering.

We have green beans, carrots, yellow squash, zucchini, peppers, four kinds of tomatoes, and pumpkins.



Pizza & Salad Garden

Kenney's Latchkey Dauphin County, PA

We created a pizza and salad garden. The advantage of this type of a garden is that it was within the reach of the children served. They had easy access, and watered as though they were house plants. The garden containers were child size boots which were very kid-friendly. Each child had a choice of what boot they wanted to use.



We grew vegetables that we could use in making pizza and salad. Our garden had lettuces, herbs, tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers. The children were involved from the beginning to the end.



After an adult placed small drain holes in the boot, the students went on a search for old cardboard and stones to line the bottom of the boot.

They filled the boot with soil, using a kid-size shovel. Plants were added and students were responsible for watering when needed.

I was glad when the children were able to see the reward of their labor. Also, it was amazing to see the happy faces when the tomatoes appeared and they were able to eat them and use the produce for our class pizza and salad lunch.



Hydroponic & Aero Gardens



The Art of Play Early Learning Center Cumberland County, PA

The Art of Play Early Learning Center has been really enjoying their experience with our Farm to ECE project. We chose to invest in a Gardyn hydroponics system so we can grow fresh fruits and veggies all year long. We have been able to grow butterhead lettuce, arugula, basil, dill, mint, mini strawberries, sweet peppers, jalapeños, kale, cherry tomato, mini eggplant, green mustard, strawberries, kale, tatsoi, breen, red sails lettuce, sweet basil, peas, thyme, cardinal, monte carol, red mustard, rouge d'hiver, Swiss chard, and, Hungarian sweet peppers, chamomile, petunias, celery, and cucumbers.

The children have been learning about how bees are vital for plant and human life because of their ability to pollinate plants. Since we don't have bees inside we use an electric toothbrush to pollinate the plants ourselves. We've also learned about root systems because our hydroponics Gardyn gives us a unique ability to view the roots of the plants. On an interesting note, the children and I learned that cucumber roots smell exactly like a freshly cut cucumber. The children's favorite part of our project is helping with weekly harvests and taste testing our fruits and veggies.

I have to add that we loved this project so much and it's such a success that we decided to get a second one so we can grow more peppers and tomatoes for the kid's salads and snacks. It arrived last week and we put the seedlings we started in it. I'm planning, in the spring, to transplant some of the plants outside as well. We get 10 seed pods a month with the membership that will go towards our outdoor garden. There are option to get flowers and other veggies/ fruits too or get empty pots to grow our own seeds. I also got special inserts for mason jars to grow using an aquaponic method called "Kratky method". So we will try to move the seedlings this week to mason jars.

This project has truly been wonderful for the kids. Oh, and our mint really took off so I asked the kids to smell the plant and guess what it was. They all guessed a "toothpaste plant". Too funny.





Brown's Family Childcare, LLC Venango County, PA

Our garden grew:

Herbs: dill, parsley, mint, thyme and 2 varieties of basil

Salad greens: black seed simpson, deer tongue, parris island, red sails, marvel of four seasons and rouge d'Hirer

Tomatoes- mini cherry

Peppers- not successful due to the need to manually pollinate them. I did not do it right apparently

Wildflowers: 4 varieties of wild flowers

In the future we will plant other flowers by seed, more lettuce, tomatoes and lavender.



The advantages of our gardening are fresh produce, growing your own produce, ascetically pleasing, bringing nature inside, great educational activity, holistic approach to mental health, saves money, minimal effort to use, and reusable pods.

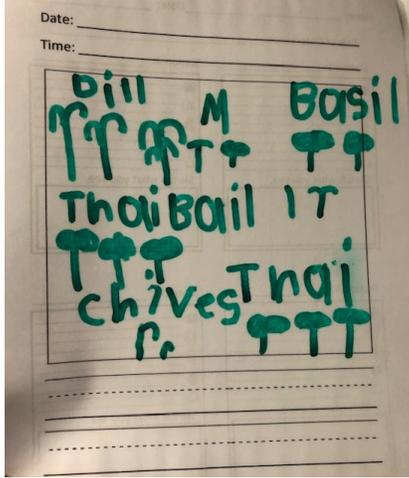
The disadvantages are some plants are toxic to children such as tomatoes. When we grow tomatoes, I put the AeroGarden in another room and show the children photos. Start up costs can be pricey, and it uses electric, therefore resulting in a higher electric bill.



Children were involved by helping place pods in the AeroGarden, adding water when needed, documenting the growth, harvesting produce when ready and helping cook with produce.

Within a few days of setting up the AeroGarden, we started seeing seedlings. My heart felt so happy because it was at that point that I knew it was actually working. It has become one of the most beneficial materials in my indoor classroom.

All of my preschoolers love watching the progress of our plants. One morning a 3-year-old girl shouted, "You grew while I was at my home! I was thinking about you growing and you did!!" That is evidence that



children are learning and thinking about gardening! That in itself makes me glad we decided to try our indoor garden.

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