

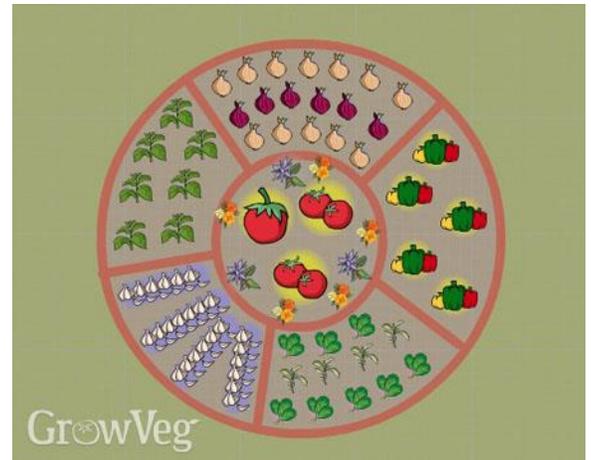
Gardening with Children – Themed Gardens - Bean Teepee Hideaway



Gardening and growing your own food seem to have come 'en vogue' again. There is a lot of self-help information online on these topics, but none is more important than showing our children how food is grown and where food actually comes from. The Schomberg Horticultural Society cannot meet right now but still wants to show their commitment to public horticultural education by sharing their **Gardening with Children** ideas.

Themed Gardens – Pizza Garden

It would be fun to make your pizza garden round, to resemble the shape of a pizza. One can dig out a round garden bed or buy a raised round fabric bed online, it can be put pretty much anywhere in the back yard, where it gets at least 5 hours of sunlight every day. Fill with triple mix and you are ready to plant: peppers, tomatoes, basil, oregano, garlic (has to be planted in the fall), onions and some Marigolds to deter pests and attract beneficial pollinators. Arugula for toppings. GrowVeg (GrowVeg.com) offers a fabulous diagram of a pizza garden. Too bad we cannot grow cheese yet.



Smoothie Garden

If you have a child that does not like to eat its vegetables, making your own smoothie and growing the ingredients themselves might entice them to consume more. Involve your children in planting and maintaining your smoothie garden. In the winter months you might want to pour over seed catalogs and discuss with them what they like in a smoothie, it could be carrots, mint, kale, spinach, beets etc. For the 'sweet' addition the options are: strawberries, raspberries, water melon, cantaloupe, blueberries, haskap berries, also known as honeyberries (*Lonicera caerulea edulis* 'Berry Blue/Tundra' bears a lot of elongated blue berries in June). You might add some bananas or avocados and maple syrup to sweeten the taste of it.

Alphabet Garden

Whether you want to grow an alphabet garden with vegetables or flowers or both is up to you, but it would be fun to go through the alphabet and find plants for every letter in the alphabet. A is for alyssum, B is for basil, C is for carrot etc..... To take it a step further you might want to make plant markers with painted stones or labels, which would help your child with spelling. Talking about colours, shapes, sizes and smell and to differentiate between edible and non-edible adds interest as well. Some flowers like nasturtiums are edible.

Bean Teepee Hideaway

There is nothing more fun for children than to hide or curl up with a great book in a hideaway spot. A bean teepee is the perfect place for that. All you need is 6 – 10 bamboo canes (6-8ft long) a string, fertile garden soil that has been amended with compost as beans are heavy feeders and climbing or pole beans (indeterminate) such as scarlet runner beans. The place where you put your teepee should get at least 5 hours of sunlight every day. Place the poles in the ground about 24 inches apart with a wider opening for the entrance door, with enough space so at least two children can sit in there. There is no set way of doing this, anchor the poles in the ground and just tie the poles together at the top so they don't fall down. If the soil is poor, amend the soil around the poles with compost.

Once all danger of frost is gone plant a bean about 2 inches deep at every pole, for added colour add nasturtiums. Water deeply, the beans should germinate in about a week. Tie the small plants loosely to the poles, after that they should be able to grow onto the poles, pinch the tops off so they branch out more. Hummingbirds and butterflies love the flowers of scarlet runner beans. Harvest the beans while they are still tender and green or let them mature for dry beans.

A bean teepee is a place where plants and imaginations can grow.



Authored by Eleonora Schmied, member of the Schomberg Horticultural Society