

It has become no laughing issue that most children in the urban setting do not know where the food they eat comes from. While some believe food comes from the supermarket, others think it comes from a refrigerator. However, backyard gardening will help bring reality to the children within their reach as they do hands-on farming at home.



This will allow them to enjoy fresh food

Teach children to grow their own food

BY RITAH MUKASA

Children need to know where food comes from and this is the reason why they should be involved in gardening.

Besides, it gives them endless opportunities to get hands-on, observe and experiment while nurturing their passion.

Leonard Muzahura, a gardener with Superior Landscapes in Nsambya, a Kampala suburb, argues that children should be introduced to gardening as early as possible.

"Let them get dirty as long as they get to love growing their own food," he says.

This will allow them to enjoy fresh food for a healthy life.

How to introduce children to gardening

Muzahura is of the view that gardening should be instilled in the children with fun.

Make it exciting by showing them how interesting it is to plant seedlings and see them grow.

"It should be a fun expedition. Let them get dirty while preparing their gardens, planting and harvesting," he advises.

Additionally, you can also set aside a corner in the backyard for them to work whenever they want. This will help them to love and appreciate plants.

Drake Kizito, a gardener, says tool kits such as gloves and gumboots come in handy to ensure children's hygiene.

He adds that in case of limited space, let the children use recycled containers, pots and sacks for gardens.

"These should be painted with interesting colours and designs to keep the passion growing," Kizito adds.

Besides, choose the most favourable plants that grow fast and require minimal maintenance for children to begin with. For example vegetables, herbs and fruits. These may include *Sukuma wiki*, spinach, tomatoes, egg plants and mints, among others.

They can also grow peas, beans, sunflowers, radishes and carrots.

These will give them positive results in a short time and motivate them to continue gardening.

Meanwhile, encourage them to start small with things around them such as growing two or more stems of *Sukuma wiki* in an old tyre or empty detergent buckets.

Gardening books

Muzahura says gardening books can also play a great role in teaching children how to grow their own food.

These explain to the child the life of a plant, how seeds grow into vegetables, trees, fruits or flowers. Many gardening books have drawings to help learners identify with the plants of their choice.

"There are many such books on the market. Just check with bookstores, libraries or big supermarkets," he advises.

Assignments

Nevertheless, give the children responsibility, more so those that show less interest in gardening.

"Assign them to water, weed or manure the plants. Gradually, they will appreciate as they see them grow to maturity," he opines.

Also, cultivate with them. Show them how to till, plant, weed, manure and harvest.

However, keep in mind their age. This will help you determine which information best suits which age.

Additionally, it is better to let them decorate their gardens in order to achieve appeasing sceneries to be proud of.

"Buy for them ornamental planters, colourful art pieces and involve them in deciding where to put them in the garden," Muzahura advises.

Let them appreciate the importance of native vegetation in the garden. Show them how to control weeds and how to care for plants.

Also, teach them how to make organic manure: "Make it adventurous by showing them how peels and other foodstuffs decompose to turn into fertile soil with time," Muzahura advises, adding that keep gardening even when seasons change.



1: Introduce children to gardening as early as possible



2: Ornamental planters produce amazing gardens



3: Get for them amazing planters

TO BRING THEM IN...



Start small with onions in an old tyre.



Kits to ensure children's hygiene.



Buy for the children colourful containers.

Watch out! 3 things you must do

1. Show the children how to till, plant, weed, manure and harvest.
2. Show them how to control weeds and how to care for plants.
3. Teach them how to make organic manure: Make it adventurous by showing them how peels and other foodstuffs decompose to turn into fertile soil

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