

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Young sprouts!



Photos Cynthia Brian

After planting her seeds, the garden must be watered.

By Cynthia Brian

“The lesson I have thoroughly learnt, and wish to pass on to others, is to know the enduring happiness that the love of a garden gives. I rejoice when I see anyone, and especially children, inquiring about flowers, and wanting gardens of their own, and carefully working in them. For love of gardening is a seed that once sown never dies, but always grows and grows to an enduring and ever-increasing source of happiness.” ~ Gertrude Jekyll

Watching the wide-eyed wonder of children during the holidays is an additional dividend of the magical season of Christmas. The twinkling lights, the tantalizing aromas of cinnamon and nutmeg, the joyful caroling tunes, and most of all, red-nosed Rudolph prancing through the night sky leading his herd of reindeer to the chimneys of good little girls and boys.

December is a great month to spark children’s enthusiasm for gardening. The rewards go far beyond reaping a harvest of fruits, flowers and vegetables. Not only do kids get to dig in the dirt, but it is also a plus if they get dirty.

Since families usually erect a Christmas tree or Hannukah Bush, it is fun to let each child grow their own tree. When my kids were young, we bought one-gallon pines, spruce, and firs to plant a Christmas tree farm. They watered, pruned, protected, and prepared the trees to be cut for our festivities. Although the trees never matched the symmetry of ones purchased from a lot, once they were festooned with all the homemade ornaments, they were uniquely

beautiful. Most of all, the children were proud that they had grown this special tree all by themselves. They also each decorated a small growing Christmas tree for their bedrooms with sparkling lights on a timer that went off at bedtime. After the holidays, the tree went out to the patio, to be tended by them.

Teaching kids to garden instills responsibility, patience, love, creativity, tolerance, hope and imagination. Their minds expand and they learn a deep appreciation for living organisms. By introducing them at a young age to the natural world, we are showing them how to respect and honor the environment. When we scrape vegetable scraps, eggshells, coffee grinds, fish bones, and other biodegradable items into a pail that we add to our outdoor compost bin, we are demonstrating the value of enriching the soil with natural, nontoxic substances. Ask your child to help you shovel woodchips into a wheelbarrow to add to the yard before winter storms arrive to prevent erosion, keep the soil warm, and provide an appealing appearance to your landscape.

Every child needs to learn where their food comes from. Healthy eating habits are learned from the ground up. Add packets of seeds to a Christmas stocking with instructions for a private pot or plot to be planted in the spring. Stuff in a small field guide about growing vegetables, fruits, and herbs. Encourage dreaming of what crops to plant in the spring. You’ll be amazed at what kids will eat when they put in the effort of growing it. Brussels sprouts? Check! Broccoli? Check! Spinach? Check!

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The pretty border plant, alyssum in purple or white is a perfect starter plant for kids.