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Jada Ruff
Buffalo County Extension
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Gardening with Kids!

Sunshine and warm weather is the perfect opportunity to gear up to plant a family garden. Research has shown that cultivating plants is beneficial for us and gardening has been associated with improvements in attitudes toward health and nutrition, better school performance for kids, family bonding, and community spirit. Gardening is a great way to grow your own fruits and vegetables, enjoy the outdoors, and get exercise.

It is not always easy preparing healthy meals that your entire family will eat without complaining, but one tool to help children establish life-long healthy habits is growing a garden. Three big areas of focus for gardening with kids include: nutrition, physical activity, and family time.

Nutrition: There have been many studies that show children who help garden are more likely to consume what they planted. This equates to eating more fruit and vegetables! They are also more likely to help choose more fresh produce at the grocery store. This makes it a little easier to prepare meals and increased nutritional status is a plus.

Physical Activity: Another positive that comes from gardening with your children is the benefits that come with physical activity. Teaching them to work the soil, plant, weed, and water are all great things. They also require movement while utilizing muscles you may not use all the time. Bending, squatting, hoeing—these all use large muscle groups and are great for anyone! Hauling soil, harvesting tomatoes, and picking beans—these are also life skills that will stay with your children the rest of their lives. Teaching them

where their food comes from and the work that is put into growing it is important. They will appreciate their food a little more. At the least, they won't answer "the grocery store" when asked where their food comes from!

Family Time: Finally—spending time with your children outside in the sun away from video games and the television is fun. You are building memories as well as working together to provide food for your family.

This information was adapted from the UNL Food Website. To find out more information or want to learn more visit <https://food.unl.edu> or call Buffalo County Extension at 308-236-1235.

Jada Ruff
Food, Nutrition, & Health Extension Education
Nebraska Extension in Buffalo County
1400 East 34th St Kearney, NE 68847
308-236-1235