

# Kids in the Garden

Aufdenberg, D. I.

Field Specialist in Horticulture, University Of Missouri Extension, Jackson, MO, 63755, aufdenbergd@Missouri.edu

## INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of children in elementary school have limited exposure to growing vegetables in the garden. Kids in the Garden was developed to teach basic vegetable gardening to fourth grade students and to use existing raised beds at South Elementary in Jackson, MO. Through gardening activities, this program increases the awareness of better nutrition, increases physical activity as well as the knowledge of growing vegetables in the garden.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Materials:

- Square foot gardening method in raised beds
- Gardening trowels, cultivators, shovels, buckets, watering cans, and plant labels
- Garden seeds: radish, lettuce, carrot, spinach, and peas
- Garden plants: cabbage, broccoli, kohlrabi, lettuce and spinach
- Master Gardener and parent volunteers
- 20 minutes education time
- 25 minutes hands-on gardening

### A series of six classes covered:

- Garden Planning and Seeding Into the Garden
- What's in a Soil?
- Parts of a Plant
- What Plants Need
- Bugs, Weeds, Diseases, Oh My!
- Harvesting and Composting



Seed starting in peat pellets.



Kids reseeding and cultivating.



Vegetable bed in mid-spring.



Kids cultivating to remove weeds and loosen the soil.

## LEARNING IN THE GARDEN

- Keep kids actively engaged to keep their attention.
- Wood lattice for marking off square foot areas degrades too quickly.
- Kids want their "own" gardening area, however, larger areas blocked in a grid allows kids to share and learn work together.
- Plants don't do well if crowded or planted too deep. Kids learned measuring, spacing and thinning.

## PROGRAM IMPACTS

**Over 95 students, 4 teachers and 8 volunteers participated with the Kids in the Garden program.**

- 100% of participants indicated they could sow seeds and plant transplants.
- 100% of participants indicated they could water and take care of plants.
- 94% of participants indicated they could identify at least 10 insects found in the garden.
- 78% of participants indicated they would be asking Mom and Dad to help plant gardens at home.

### Kids Responded:

"List two things you learned about gardening during the program this year", participants reported:

- How far apart to plant and how long it takes to grow.
- How to plant seeds and how to plant plants
- That you have to plant at certain depths and don't leave a trowel on the ground
- Worms are good and pull up weeds but don't wait too long
- Ladybugs are good and how to break up the soil;
- Gardening is a lot more fun than I thought it would be
- What to add and what not to add to compost