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July 2022

Gardening with Children

Getting children to eat healthy can be challenging; however, gardening can be a fun and inexpensive way to spark children's curiosity in trying vegetables and fruits. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is available to help and teach you about what grows best in your area and make your family's experience a positive one. Recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can use their food assistance benefits to purchase food-producing seeds and plants to grow their own food. Let us dig-in to find out more!

Do your research

Before getting your children completely involved do a little research to find the best times to plant various vegetables and fruits in your area. Consult your local

county extension office for advice. Visit <https://counties.agrilife.org/> to locate your local county extension office or you can learn more at <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/>.

Involve your children in the process

Gardening creates hands-on experiences for children that creates interest and to try fruits and vegetables they might not have previously been given. Include your children in the process of choosing a location, helping decide what to plant, planting the seeds in the soil, watering the seeds, and ensuring plenty of sunlight reaches the plants.



Look for a space that is mostly sunny and not directly in the shade. You can plant your seeds and transplants directly in-ground, in a raised bed, or in a container like a pot or recycled 5-gallon bucket. Make sure soil is soft enough for your children to handle whether it is with their hands, shovel, or spade. Children can get their hands dirty by helping mix in compost! Other tasks your child can do include digging, pushing a cart while shopping, filling pots and garden bags, carrying and using a watering can or hose, picking ripe tomatoes and peppers, or tasting the produce.

Your child will be excited to watch the changes in the plant and see the vegetable or fruit develop into a tasty and nutritious food! Also, your child will have an appreciation of where their food comes from and what it takes to produce it. As you are getting started, keep it simple and start small.

Use your SNAP benefits

SNAP recipients can maximize their produce purchasing power when they use their Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card to buy food-producing plants and seeds to grow a garden of their favorite vegetables and fruits. To take the guess work out of finding authorized SNAP retailers, there is a SNAP Retailer locator at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-locator>.

Written by Wendy Hamilton, Extension Agent - Better Living for Texans
Content Source: <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/7-tips-vegetable-gardening>,
https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/use_your_snap_benefits_to_grow_a_garden, and
www.JMGkids.us/LGEG
Photo Source: <https://www.istockphoto.com/photo/little-boy-in-garden-smelling-fresh-herbs-gm517446415-49107296>



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**Below are upcoming Better Living for Texans programs
at a community center near you!**

Precinct 1 Love Community Center, 1000 W 12th St., Houston: youth ***Walk n Talk*** started June 22nd!

Precinct 2 Maxwell Adult Center, 1201 Center Street, Deer Park: adult ***Walk n Talk*** started July 7th!

Precinct 2 Houston Community College Northline Campus, 8001 Fulton St. Houston: ***Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities*** adult garden program starts July 21st!

Precinct 1 West End Multiservice Center Senior Program, 170 Heights Blvd: ***A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!*** Adult nutrition program starts August 2nd!

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**In Harris County your BLT Extension agents are found at
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
13105 Northwest Freeway, Suite 1000
Houston, TX 77040**



Lora Jorgensen
lora.jorgensen-tjorn@ag.tamu.edu
713-274-0985

Kristina Brown
kristina.brown@ag.tamu.edu
713-274-0967

Jasmine Carey
jasmine.carey@ag.tamu.edu
713-274-0970



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TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

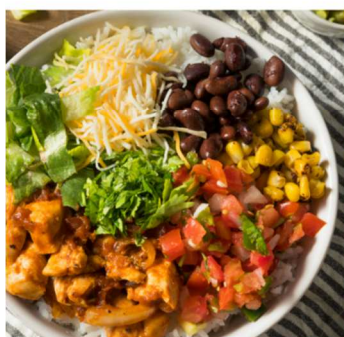
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BLT programs are FREE and are designed & funded to be delivered to SNAP-eligible audiences. We offer adult and youth programs.

Get the Facts (Obtenga los Datos) is a 4-session series to help participants learn how to use the Nutrition Facts label to make healthy food choices when shopping. Special emphasis is given on sodium, fats, added sugars, and portion size. Free item at every session!



A Fresh Start to a Healthier You! (¡El primer paso hacia una vida más sana!) is a 4-session series for adults to increase fruit & vegetable intake, cook nutritious meals, adopt better food safety habits, and spend less on groceries. Free item at every session!

Be Well, Live Well (Estar bien, Vivir Bien) is a 5-session series. Adults 50+ will learn how to reduce disease risk and engage in a healthy lifestyle while aging, by learning which nutrients to focus on, food label reading, kitchen safety, meal planning for small households, and the benefits of physical activity while aging. Free item at every session!

Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities (Creciendo y Nutriéndose Curso de Horticultura para Comunidades Saludables)

is a six-session series to learn basic garden techniques such as how to select a garden location, how to compost, plant and water, and control insects. Participants will do a hands-on planting activity and receive free garden items!



Healthy Carbohydrates is a 4-week series that teaches participants to choose healthy types and portions of carbohydrates to help decrease chronic disease risk. Free item at every session!

Walk 'n Talk is an 8-week series in which participants learn how to use walking or other activity for fitness and how to include more fruits & vegetables in their daily routine. Free item at every session!



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Recipe of the Month

Recipe and photo source: Junior Master Garden Kitchen, <https://imgkids.us/gardenkitchen/>

Red Leaf Lettuce and Strawberry Salad

How the children can help: wash the produce, measure the ingredients, combine the dressing ingredients, shake the dressing, and drizzle the dressing over the salad.

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

Dressing*

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of vegetable oil
- 3 tablespoons of vinegar
- 2 tablespoons of honey
- 1 teaspoon of mustard
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon of salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon of cinnamon
- *Optional: substitute $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of balsamic vinaigrette or another low-fat dressing

Salad

- 4 cups of red leaf lettuce greens
- $\frac{1}{4}$ pound of strawberries, sliced (about 1 cup)

Directions:

1. Wash your hands and clean your cooking area.
2. In a small jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the oil, vinegar, honey, mustard, salt, and cinnamon. Cover the jar and shake it well. If no jar is available, blend the ingredients in a bowl with a fork. Chill the dressing until it's time to serve it.
3. Rinse and cut the leafy tops off the strawberries and slice them lengthwise into fourths.
4. Place the red leaf lettuce greens in the colander and run water over them. Drain them and pat them dry.
5. In a large mixing bowl, combine the lettuce and sliced strawberries. Toss them gently.
6. Drizzle the dressing over the salad as desired.



Nutrients Per Serving: 210 calories, 19 g total fat, 2 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 95 mg sodium, 13 g carbohydrates, 1 g fiber, 11 g total sugar, and 1 g protein

Total Cost: \$\$\$\$



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