

APRIL 2023

LIVING
Smart



PLANT A GREAT GARDEN

Spring brings with it a desire for growing things. Get your green thumb on by planting a garden. Following are some quick tips for getting started.

Start small. Few things kill a budding gardening hobby like being overwhelmed. Plant just a few things, not a massive garden. Next year, you can do more.

Dig in good soil. The best gardeners do their best work before they put plants or seeds into the ground, amending their soil to make it easier to dig and more likely to support plant growth. Not sure about your soil quality? Ask for advice at a local garden shop.

Grow what you like. Plant what you'll enjoy, whether

that's beautiful flowers or tasty veggies, and the work will feel more rewarding.

Spend a few minutes every day. Don't try to do all of your gardening in one day over the weekend. Things can get out of hand in a hurry. Do a little every day and you'll stay ahead of problems ... and give yourself a daily break from routines.

Water wisely. Too much or too little water will sink a garden. Water daily at the beginning of the season and cut back over time so roots go deeper. Quick tip: Yellow leaves usually mean too much water; green, wilted plants are thirsty!

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Cultivating Kids' Interest in Gardening
- 3 Improve Your Immunity
- 4 Harvest of the Month: Lettuce

Smart Facts

55%

of American households do some gardening.

18.3M

rookies dug into gardening during the pandemic.

\$48B

is spent on lawn and gardening equipment each year.



CULTIVATING KIDS' INTEREST IN GARDENING

Looking for a way to get your kids to eat better, get outside more, develop responsibility and do more with the family? Look no further than that empty, sunny spot in the backyard. Putting a family garden in that spot could help achieve those parenting goals and more. A number of studies have shown that kids will be more inclined to eat fresh produce if they helped grow it. And planting, managing and harvesting a garden nurtures character development.

"Spending time in the garden offers opportunities to develop all kinds of skills," says Empowered Parents creator Tanja McIlroy. "The benefits of gardening in early childhood are physical, emotional, spatial, mathematical, sensory awareness, character development, creative ideas, and just a love and appreciation of nature."

Of course the kids have to be involved in the garden to get these benefits and keeping them engaged can be challenge. Following are a few tips to help make it work.

Let them help with planning. When it's time to plan the garden, get the kids involved. Let them learn about and help choose what you'll grow. Work with them to plot out the garden.

Give them their own tools. Nothing will make a youngster more excited about an activity than getting their own tools. Choose age-appropriate garden tools made for little hands and they'll be happy to literally dig in.

Make it a family affair. Include everyone in the fun and the work of putting a garden together. Make sure jobs are shared as much as possible, and no one person feels like it's a burden or like they've been left out.

Make them a part of the whole process. Make sure to include the kids in every step of the process, from the strenuous work of preparing the plot through the planting, watering, weeding and harvesting.

Cook with what the family grows. Make sure to use produce from the garden in family meals, always noting when something from the garden has made it to the family table.

Make it a sensory experience. Help the kids get the full gardening experience by engaging their senses: feeling the texture of plant stems, studying leaves up-close, smelling blossoms and so on. The more they learn to love the entire plant – and not just the end product—the more they'll enjoy the overall experience.



"Spending time in the garden offers opportunities to develop all kinds of skills."

IMPROVE YOUR IMMUNITY THROUGH SLEEP AND NUTRITION

One of the most valuable things we can possess is our health. The cornerstones of maintaining good health are health promotion and disease prevention. So, how do we encourage health promotion and disease prevention in our routines? Well, we must focus on improving our immunity through sleep and nutrition. Without enough sleep on a consistent basis, our chances of developing obesity, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke, poor mental health, or even early death increase. Consequently, poor nutrition can add to stress and tiredness while diminishing work capacity, further contributing to the risk of developing unwanted health problems.

Some foods and drinks affect our sleep in ways that make it more difficult for us to fall and stay asleep. By the same token, not getting enough sleep can affect our appetite, leaving us experiencing more hunger, feeling less full and likely craving more foods and drinks that can wreck our sleep. To better maintain our long-term health and well-being, it is in our best interests to shut down this negative feedback loop and take steps to be more proactive in managing our sleep and nutrition. Following are some quick tips to help you get started.

Get enough sleep. Each night when we count the appropriate number of sheep and clock in at least seven hours of sleep, we are providing essential support to our immune system. When we wake, we are better equipped to deal with various infections and inflammatory conditions trying to take us down.

Avoid caffeine and alcohol several hours before bed. Caffeine and alcohol are two of the heavyweight champions of sleep disruption – that oat milk cappuccino you had in the afternoon can still keep you up at bedtime. Alcohol, although it might make you sleepy at first, disrupts sleep later in the night.

Keep away from spicy, sugary and fatty foods late at night. These foods have the potential to negatively affect your sleep pattern if you're having too much of them late in the day.

If you're having trouble sleeping, odds are you're not feeling all that great. That's because good sleep is just as important as diet and exercise. Just like the thigh bone is connected to the hip bone, and the hip bone is connected to the backbone, optimal health and well-being are connected to sleep which is connected to nutrition which is fueled and enhanced by exercise. Our bodies are biological machines comprised of systems that all work together. A healthy lifestyle promotes a robust immune system. By taking care of yourself, including paying attention to the relationship between sleep and nutrition, your immune system will ultimately take care of you.



World Parkinson's Day

Each year, 90,000 Americans are diagnosed with Parkinson's disease but no two of them will experience the disease the same way. A highly individualized neurodegenerative disorder, Parkinson's can have effects that range from the virtually unrecognizable to the severe and debilitating. April 11 is set aside each year to increase understanding of the disease and life with it. Learn more [here](#).

HARVEST OF THE MONTH: LETTUCE

Lettuce is a crop of varied stature. While it is thought to have first sprouted as a lowly weed around the Mediterranean Sea some 6,000 years ago, lettuce gained enough status as a source of good health that, around the first century AD, Augustus Caesar apparently built a statue to it. Today, lettuce is commonly praised as one of the healthiest vegetables humans can eat, but is also often derided as “rabbit food” (a term apparently coined for it almost 100 years ago).

Regardless of its status, lettuce, in its countless varieties, is well-regarded for its positive nutritional punch, with an impressive batch of vitamin C, iron, and fiber ... which could explain why the average American eats about 30 pounds of lettuce every year. If you plan to make lettuce a part of dinner, you'll usually get to choose between head lettuce and leaf lettuce. In both cases, choose lettuce that is crisp and brightly colored. Avoid lettuce that seems damaged or bruised, accepting that outside leaves sometime are a little



battered, but the overall head should be healthy-looking. While it will vary from one type to another, when properly stored, lettuce should stay fresh and crisp for 7 to 10 days, with head lettuce typically lasting longer than individual leaves. To store lettuce, keep it bunched as tightly as possible and wrap it in paper towels before placing it in the refrigerator.



Recipe: Grilled Romaine with Chive-Buttermilk Dressing

Ingredients:

- 2 romaine hearts, halved lengthwise
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoon buttermilk
- 3 tablespoons reduced-fat plain Greek yogurt
- 4 teaspoons minced fresh chives
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon minced garlic
- Dash salt
- Dash pepper
- ¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- 4 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled

Directions:

Brush romaine halves with oil, and then place romaine on grill, uncovered, over medium-high heat for 6-8 minutes or until leaves begin to wilt and change color, turning once. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk buttermilk, yogurt, chives, lemon juice, garlic, salt and pepper until blended; drizzle over cut sides of romaine. Top with cheese and bacon.

Nutrition Information:

CALORIES: 176; SUGARS: 1G; FAT: 15G; CARBOHYDRATES: 3G; FIBER: 1G; SODIUM: 299MG

Sources: Accessed March 3, 2023

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