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**A Family Garden for Nature**

**By Gayle Olson**

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Each year we look forward to creating a special habitat for for all of our wild and natural friends. Spring has arrived and we have been busy welcoming the season by preparing the garden for all of our summer visitors.

Anyone can create a garden – even you! When some people think about gardening, they think they need a lot of space or a big back yard. Even if you live in an apartment and have no yard at all, you can still create your own natural space with container gardens or window boxes.

Gardening isn't just for grownups! You can never be too young or too old to build a special place for nature. Would you like to learn how to grow your own garden? Let's get started because there is a lot to learn about creating your special place in nature.

Planning Your Plot

The first step to growing a great garden is planning. You will need to choose a location which receives at least five to seven hours of sunlight each day. Plants like a lot of sunlight to grow!

Next, get permission from your parents or responsible adult. Before agreeing on the location make sure there are no hidden dangers or obstacles beneath the soil. You don't want to risk the danger of having cables or water pipes beneath your plot. A big rock or tree roots could prove to be an unwelcome obstacle.

Once your special adult approves of your location it's time to think about size and shape. Don't try to plan too much your first year. Your garden will require plenty of work and a bit of time. At first a small garden is just right. It will be easier to take care of and it will be a good opportunity to learn about plants and gardens.

Add something new to your garden each year. This way you will have a few new varieties to learn about.

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Gardens come in all sorts of shapes including square, rectangle, triangle, circle and even pie-shaped!. Choose one that works best for your yard or compliments existing structures.

Sketch the plot shape in your Garden Journal. Include the approximate size of the garden, and mark which side of your garden faces north. This information will come in handy when you decide the right number of flowers or vegetables to plant.

Now it is time to decide which plants to include in your garden. When choosing your plants pay attention to the type of climate, amount of sunshine and space requirements for the plant. Just because it looks cool or is a vegetable you just love doesn't mean the plant will be happy in your garden!

Seed catalogs, online resources and gardening books are a big help when making your plant list. Decide whether you will be growing annuals, perennials, or both. Annuals (plants that live only one season) grow quickly and come in all sorts of colors and shapes. Perennials (plants that live for several years) bloom year-after-year. We enjoy watching them get bigger and better every year! We prefer a combination of both annuals and perennials.

Make your garden interesting by combining different colors, sizes and shapes of flowers and leaves. If you like, you can paste pictures from catalogs or magazines in your Garden Journal.

Will you be planting seeds or established, young plants from the nursery? Starting from seed is the least expensive. Many varieties can be planted outside as soon as the weather is warm. Not all seeds are easy to start. You can purchase small, established plants which are difficult to start from seed.

We save the seeds from all of the plants in our Garden for Nature. When the seeds have developed we collect them in a big old coffee tin. All the seeds from all the plants mix together. It's the special garden mixture that we use the next year for our garden.

You don't need to have a big yard or a yard at all to create a garden. Container gardens and window boxes are fun too. And they are a LOT less work!

Full articler and related Internet resources:

<http://scienceforfamilies.allinfo-about.com/features/naturegarden1.html>

Internet content developer and author since 1995.

### **Get Some Garden Tools**

**By Rachael Cleipher**

It is spring now, and for many people, that means getting out into the garden. I for one love getting into my garden and spending hour after hour preparing the soil and planting the seeds of my favorite

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vegetables, fruits and flowers. If you love to garden then you know a few things are absolutely essential. Having the right garden tools is one thing that no gardener, however amateur or experienced, can go without.

I have loved being in my garden for as long as I can remember. My husband and children have to pull me out of the garden as the sun goes down all too often during the spring and summer months. I'm kind of like a kid in that way I guess, because I just cannot get enough time outside. My love for gardening has only increased since I got a new set of garden tools for Christmas.

My family knows me well. I am a woman of few and simple interests, but the interests I have I devote myself to and spend a lot of time doing. Working in my garden is no exception. So when it came time to make a Christmas list earlier this year garden tools quickly made it to the top. My family knows that they can plan to buy me new garden tools about every other year. I make a fairly specific request for certain kinds of garden tools the longer I am in the garden and know what works better. I usually ask for a certain kind of shovel or a certain pair of garden gloves.

Just like my children, I could hardly wait to open my presents on Christmas morning. I knew I would receive the usual pair of pajamas and slippers, but I couldn't wait for anything more than my new set of garden tools. My family didn't let me down. They presented me with a fabulous set of garden tools that I must have looked at for a half an hour and each day after that until spring came. The garden tools were by far the best set I had ever received.

If you know a gardener, consider getting them a set of great garden tools. There is nothing a true gardener would like more than to feel confident that they have the right set of garden tools to work their magic in the soil. Look for great garden tools at local gardening shops or at home improvement stores. Talk to other gardeners and see what sets of garden tools are popular and durable. Then buy the gardener the gift of their dreams.

Rachael Cleipher loves to spend time in her garden, but only when she is using great garden tools. She encourages gardeners everywhere to purchase the best garden tools. See more at



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