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FOR HEALTHY LIVING
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LIVE LEARN GROW



YMCA Of Central Massachusetts

ymcaofcm.org

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The Benefits of Gardening

A garden is an interactive, engaging, learning environment for people of all ages, especially children. When children are introduced to gardening, improved eating habits along with a better awareness of healthy food and good nutrition are established. A greater respect for nature is introduced through gardening and outdoor activity is increased and more rewarding. Gardening is an easy hands on approach to incorporating STEM concepts into your program's daily life. This curriculum supports children's natural curiosity about the world around them and provides a prolonged opportunity to make inquiry-based investigations, to help define nature and substance, to ask questions (science), explore using microscopes (technology), solve problems (engineering) and use mathematics and computational thinking all while having fun.

Parents report that when their children are involved in gardening they eat more healthy types of food. Their awareness of good nutrition multiplies due to involvement in the food production process. Leafy greens, fruits, and vegetables cease to be mysterious and a sense of dietary pride is instilled in our families as they harvest and prepare their fresh produce.

When a person has the opportunity to grow their own food, the importance of being a responsible steward of our planet has greater value. Caring for the development of various plants displays both the fragility and strength of our planet's ecology, fostering a sense of awe and appreciation. A solid connection to Earth's various life forms and biological systems is best formed by getting your hands dirty.

By just simply being outside, an individual's outlook on life can improve. Our bodies can interact with sunlight to produce helpful chemicals, which helps combat challenging attitudes, depression, and other mental health issues. Interpersonal relationship skills and positive bonding experiences are advanced and encouraged by working in group settings in the open air. Nature becomes the teacher as well as the classroom when people are in the garden.

Gardening supports mental, emotional, social, and personal development. Positive experiences with people, food, and the environment impact not only our children's lives, but our families' and communities' lives. Get involved in gardening with your family, your community, your school, your church, or your local YMCA and experience the beneficial results for yourself.

The Boroughs Family Branch YMCA has created a variety of lesson plans for you to view & use.

These lesson plans can be found at www.mass.gov/eec