

# Summer Learn and Play

## Floral Design for Kids

**Overview:** Flower arrangements are popular gifts, but buying pre-made designs can be expensive. Use this activity to help kids create their own simple floral designs while building fine motor skills and tapping into their creativity!

### Materials:

- Assorted fresh flowers and foliage
- A container (plastic cups will work or any type of water proof container)
- Wet floral foam (make sure it says 'wet' on the package)
- Scissors
- Optional: floral anchor tape



### Instructions:



1. Collect the supplies. You can harvest flowers and foliage from your garden if available. If harvested from the garden, it is best to cut them early in the morning and immediately place in a bucket of water to make sure they don't wilt. Zinnias are a great choice because they are available in a wide array of colors, are easy to grow and have sturdy stems for arranging. You can also find flowers at local grocery stores and florists. Daisies, mums, carnations (regular or mini), baby's breath and leatherleaf are some floral industry standards that are usually fairly inexpensive and are also durable and long lasting.

2. Place the floral foam in a tub of water until fully saturated. Cut pieces of foam to fit your containers. About ½ inch of the foam should stick out above the container. If cut to a close fit, the foam should be secure. Floral anchor tape (essentially a thin duck tape), can be used to secure the foam if needed. To use, place anchor tape in a cross using two pieces that intersect off center. Make sure to let kids know that it is important not to press the foam tightly because the air holes in the foam fill with water and help keep your flowers looking fresh for a few days. You can designate one block for pressing if little fingers are determined to experience the sensation.



3. Next kids can start placing the flowers and foliage. Start with the foliage. Before placing the stems in the foam, re-cut each stem and remove the leaves on the bottom inch or two so that you have a smooth stem to insert into the foam. Once you stick the stem in the foam it will stay in place as long as you only stick it in once. After you have a light covering of foliage, begin inserting the flowers. Once again re-cut the stems, clean off bottom leaves and stick them into the foam one time. Simple round arrangements are good designs for beginners. To help the arrangement take shape, tell younger kids that they want to think of the arrangement like half of a basketball and you want to make sure to cover all sides.

4. Once the designs are done, make a special card to go with your arrangement. Remember to keep the floral foam moist to make sure your flowers continue to look fresh for a long as possible.



# Grow a Snack Garden

**Overview:** Fill your garden with edible crops that can be harvested, washed and enjoyed straight from the garden with very little to no preparation. Perfect for a quick snack!

## **Materials:**

- Vegetable seeds (see suggestions below)
- Container, raised beds, or in-ground gardens
- Plenty of sunshine and water

## **Instructions:**

1. Find a location to plant your vegetable snack garden. You will want a site that receives 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight, has well-draining soil, protection from pests, and a nearby water source. The size of your new snack garden can vary greatly from a few containers on a sunny balcony to an easily accessible corner of land in your yard. If you are new to gardening or limited by space, consider using [container gardens](#). If you are concerned about your soil quality or want to make maintenance a little bit easier, check out [raised beds](#).

2. With your young gardeners, select the snackable veggies you would like to grow. There are a few suggestions below.

3. Water, weed, repeat. For specific information on how to care for your veggies, check out our [Growing Guides](#).

4. Harvest and enjoy! Nothing tastes better than fresh veggies from the garden.

**Snap peas** are early birds, ready to go in the ground as soon as the soil is dry enough to work in the spring. Peas grow well when the weather is cool, but seeds planted in cold, wet soil sometimes rot before they germinate. To get your peas off to a reliable early start, pre-germinate your pea seeds indoors. A few days before you're ready to plant them outdoors, place the seeds between moist paper towels enclosed in a plastic bag or container and set in a dark spot at room temperature. Check after 24 hours. Once you see tiny roots beginning to emerge from the seeds, they are ready to go in the ground. Handle them carefully so you don't snap off the roots and don't let them dry out. Pre-germination usually takes just 1-3 days. Provide your pea vines with a support around which their tendrils can curl; be sure to set it in place before you plant your seeds. Once the harvest starts, pick the pods frequently – a great jobs for kids! Snap peas are at their most delectable, crunchy best when the pods start to fatten but the before the seeds inside really begin to swell.

**Leafy greens** like kale and collards are delicious and nutritious! **Kale** is the belle of the vegetable garden ball. Blue-green curled kale is as lovely as a bouquet; lacy-leaved 'Red Russian' provides color and texture; and lacinato, also called Tuscan or dinosaur kale, has long, puckered leaves that are especially tender. Whichever variety you grow, kale is a nutritional superstar. Seeds of cold-hardy kale can be planted as much as a month before the last spring frost date. Begin harvesting individual leaves as soon as they reach usable size. For fresh eating, harvest when the leaves are 2-3" long and still tender. You can also wait until the leaves are larger and steam or stir-fry them. Kale also makes a good fall crop; in fact, it tastes the sweetest when it's picked after it has been touched by frost. Start seeds 10-12 weeks before the fall frost date for a late-season harvest. Below you can find an easy recipe for making healthy kale chips.

**Carrots** are probably the veggie kids love to harvest most. Pulling a bright orange carrot out of the soil is like unearthing buried treasure. For easy snacking, grow short varieties like the 1-2” long, round Parisian market types. After a quick wash, kids can pop them right into their mouths. Seeds can go into the ground as early as 3 weeks before the last spring frost date. Seeds are tiny, so for kid-friendly planting look for pelleted seeds, with the individual seeds encased in a natural clay coating so they are easier to handle. Carrot seeds are also slow to germinate, so mix them with some quick-sprouting radish seeds at planting time. The radish plants will mark where the carrot seeds are planted, and their sprouting will break up the soil crust, making it easier for the carrot seedlings to pop up. Plus when you harvest the radishes, you’ll automatically thin the carrots. And as a bonus, radishes are a snackable veggie, too!

**Cherry tomatoes** are warmth lovers, so wait a week or two after the last frost date to set plants in the garden. Started transplants are widely available at greenhouses and garden stores, but if you are ambitious you can start your own from seed 6 to 8 weeks before your setting-out date. Just be sure your seedlings get plenty of light so they grow strong and sturdy. Give your tomato plants support with stakes or a wire cage. This keeps leaves and ripening tomatoes off the ground and makes for harvesting right at kid level.

**Cucumbers** also like it warm. Don’t rush your planting -- wait until the soil is nice and warm and all danger of frost is past. Cukes are fast-growing and don’t transplant easily, so sowing the seeds directly in the garden works well. But if you’re shooting for the earliest harvest, you can start seeds indoors in individual peat pots 3-4 weeks before the set-out date, and then transplant young plants carefully, pot and all, into the garden. Unless you are growing bush varieties, give cucumber vines some support to climb up, such as a trellis. Juicy cukes are mostly water, so keeping the soil consistently moist (but not soggy) is vital for producing tasty cukes. For a unique harvest, grow lemon cucumbers. These small, round, pale yellow cukes are especially sweet and flavorful.

### Extension:

Consider serving the veggies from the garden to kids with a **homemade dip**! A [hummus dip](#) will increase the amount of fiber and protein that kids get, which will help to keep them full for longer. It also helps to maintain blood sugar levels. Hummus has a high amount of fat but it’s good fat from olive oil and sesame paste, not saturated fat. The sight of the words good and fat in the same sentence may leave you scratching your head. However, the fats in the dips help make the healthful phytonutrients, like carotenoids, more available for absorption in the body.

A [yogurt dip](#) is another healthy choice to enhance vegetable snacks. Yogurt-based dips are a good source of calcium, which is important for kids’ growing bones. While kids are having fun dipping into these tasty snacks, these combos will curb their appetites and deliver important nutrients. Involve kids in the process of making these basic dips for the veggies that you grow, and you’ll find lots more veggie enthusiasm!

