



FAIRFAX COUNTY TIMES

HOME & GARDENS

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Engaging your children in gardening

By Gioia Caiola Forman
GREENSPRING MASTER GARDENER

During this challenging pandemic time with isolation, home schooling, and many without paychecks, even the most creative parents are having difficulty trying to fill their kids' time and keeping them engaged in meaningful activities. Reading, puzzles, art, board games, writing, biking, walking, movies; all this can get old. How about making your own miniature garden?

Miniature gardens are not new. They debuted in the United States in 1893 at the Japanese Pavilion at the Chicago World's Fair. Soon after the New York Times featured miniature gardens in an article and the popularity grew. So, get the kids and join this historical revolution.

Making these gardens is an activity for life as we now know it. It can be done without buying anything, just using

around the house and neighborhood. Miniature gardens are filled with small plants and trinkets. A gardener can customize the garden anyway she wants. Children can go through their toys looking for small statues of people, cars, trucks, and discarded game board pieces. Look around the house for shells, starfish, bugs, bird figurines, and marbles. Any of these can be used. If you don't have a flower pot then a cooking pot, bucket, storage container, old lunch box, toy truck, or even a small suitcase can be turned into a garden. Use your imagination. Remember it needs drainage holes to keep the plants healthy and not overwatered. You should use potting soil.

This activity can be a multi-day project. Begin by watching a YouTube video, "Fairy and Mini Garden, Garden Answer by Laura." Then make a plan for your garden. Another day collect items on a walk. Pick up twigs to make a ladder

or bridge, pine cones to make flowers, sand for a path, or sculpting clay to make chairs, tables, flower pots and urns. You can paint any of these.

Parents who don't garden but want to learn with their kids can help them find plants to use. Dig up dandelions or a 4 X 4 piece of grass with soil and roots, look for violas that can be used, and even small houseplants that need a new home. You don't need a lot and you're planting the seed of gardening and resourcefulness in your children.

Gardening is an adventure for kids. Designing and making a fairy garden is an easy way to stimulate ideas for arousing your child's curiosity. As you work together on a project talk about future family field trips related to gardening and nature. Life will get back to normal.

I love gardening. Working the soil is in my blood and I often involve children and adults in making miniature/fairy gardens. It's a fun project for any age.



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