



"Grandpa Gardener

Growing Gardens. Growing Children.™
By Grandpa Gardener



Be a Gardening Crusader!

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As we endure another hot Arizona summer, gardening is the last thing on our minds—at least until fall planting. However, it's never too soon to think about how we can use gardening all year long to benefit our community and schools. This month Grandpa Gardener poses an important question: how can we use gardening to improve our lives and be that change that we wish to see in our community? In other words, how can we be **Gardening Crusaders**? We already know from empirical evidence that gardening improves our ability to educate children on several issues like the environment, nutrition, social behavior, and academic fundamentals. Considering this important fact, we know gardening is a wonderful multi-functional vehicle in which we can make many improvements and do many things. Here are a few things that you can do to earn the mark of a **Gardening Crusader**:

- 1) **Plant Seeds of Change.** "Be the change that you want to see in the world." This is a quote attributed to the philosopher and activist, Gandhi. By planting a garden, you can create an entire ecosystem that provides multiple benefits. Whether it's a flower garden, planting trees, native desert plants or vegetables, gardens can beautify a space, help our environment by reducing carbon emissions and increasing environmental stewardship, as well as provide nutritious sustenance. Gardening can improve our health through physical activity, be a source for some alone time or be a community-gathering place. It is a wonderful educational tool for children and adults alike ranging from learning the basics to training as a master gardener.
- 2) **Grow Young Minds.** Gardening provides a real learning opportunity. By developing a community or school garden, we can get everyone involved in the process, including parents, teachers, volunteers, community partners, and of course, the children. It seems as though the highest level of cooperation, learning, and change occur when everyone gets involved. Gardening can work for all academic levels. Children who have difficulty in the classroom often excel in a field where it is more hands on.
- 3) **Frequent a Farmer's Market.** Farmer's Markets are wonderful places to support the local vendors in your community and offer a great excuse for a family outing. You can also be supportive of these functions as volunteer, or if you have a green thumb, join as a vendor participant. These markets are full of healthy, organically grown vegetables and fruits and often have fun crafts and other natural, plant-based products for sale. What a fun, healthy, and environmentally-friendly way to spend an afternoon or evening!
- 4) **Root for Recycling.** Recycling, composting, and rejuvenating our environment have become top concerns. Gardening is an excellent way to be a part of these efforts. You can reuse garden containers, recycle broken ones, and compost yard waste and leftovers to replenish the soil. Rain collectors are also important to recycle water for irrigating your garden.
- 5) **Sprout a Garden Club.** A Garden Club provides an ongoing way for adults to share information, gain experience, teach others and give back to their schools and communities.

We hope these simple ideas are helpful as you look forward to fall planting. Until next time, we give **two green thumbs** up for all of those **Gardening Crusaders** out there! As always, Good Gardening! Please visit us at www.GrandpaGardener.com!