

Learning with Seeds

The process of planning, growing and harvesting gardens provides a practical, hands-on learning experience that can cover a range of subjects. Directly involving children in growing gardens can be a more memorable and meaningful learning experience than simply reading books or listening to lectures. Examples of subjects that have been taught with gardens and some approaches used to train students follow:

- **How to grow a vegetable garden** - Students must be taught how to properly grow a garden and then plant seed that will grow, otherwise failure will result. Once learned, this skill can remain with them for a lifetime. Gardening success will motivate some to continue gardening and for some, kindle an interest in a career in agriculture.
- **Nutrition** - The importance of including vegetables rich in essential vitamins and minerals in diets can be emphasized. Actually seeing and eating the vegetables they grow can make this a memorable learning experience for children.
- **Food preservation** - Vegetables can be stored for use well after harvest, but people must be taught how. Crops grown can be dried, canned or stored in root cellars. Preserving vegetables can be important in areas with a limited seasonal food supply.
- **Science** - Observing, recording and analyzing data is basic to many if not all sciences. A whole range of garden data is possible for students to accumulate and analyze.
- **Mathematics** - 125 seeds are planted and 78 germinate. What percentage germinated? How many plants spaced 12.5 cm. each way can be grown in an area 10x10 meters?
- **Environment and Nature** - Plants produce oxygen humans need to live and consume the carbon dioxide humans produce. Students can sow seeds, grow the plants until they mature and produce seed, plant the new seeds and start the cycle of life over again.
- **Leadership** - Each crop in a garden can be assigned to a team of students and team leadership is rotated within the team. Leaders are given responsibility for directing activities of team members starting to learn leadership skills at an early age.

Millions of people of all ages in communities large and small throughout the world grow gardens successfully. They have been taught to do so properly. They were not born with this skill. Proper gardening techniques are not complex and can be learned by most people.

In the process of planning, growing and harvesting gardens children and young people can have a practical and enjoyable learning experience far beyond just learning how to grow a garden. Seed Programs International (SPI) has programs to supply schools seeds and training materials to assist in this effort.