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Kids in the Garden

The soil temperature is warming up enough for seed germination, in fact weed seeds may be germinating now. Cool season vegetable seeds such as broccoli and spinach can be planted in the ground and cool season annuals such as pansy and violets can be put out as well even though we still have one month before the average last frost date. Warm season seeds need a little more time before being planted outside. Now is a great time to start a quick indoor project to get children excited about gardening indoors.

When I asked some children what they liked about the garden they said, “I like to plant things.”, “I like to water plants.” and “I like to dig.” What a wonderful little group of helpers this could be. Children enjoy learning how plant seeds work. This is an easy thing to show anyone by planting seeds indoors in containers and watching them grow. Children will be even more excited if the plants do well enough to be planted outdoors.

Look for a location that gets plenty of light and has room for a table that can hold trays or pots of soil. Gather trays such as those that strawberries or salads come in or use wide flower pots. Large seeds work well as they are reliable germinators although they may not transplant well. Pumpkins, watermelon and beans will germinate well but the beans will not transplant well. The bean seeds can be used to show children what goes on under the soil as a seed germinates. Plant 10 beans and dig one up each day to see what has happened so far.

Lettuce is a seed that will germinate quickly but will not transplant well, however lettuce can be planted in a long pot and kept indoors to pick and eat. If a deep pot can be located carrots could also be tried for this purpose.

Make sure when planting seeds indoors that the pots are kept in a warm window but not in direct light, that the soil is kept moist but not wet and that the children are able to inspect the containers each day to see what is going on.

By establishing an interest in gardening now, children can pick up a hobby that can feed them for a lifetime. Give this idea a try and see what grows besides seeds.

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