



Growing Youth Gardeners

Every club should have some kind of a youth program or activity with a club member(s) in charge as the youth gardening representative. Any club member can sponsor/mentor any child, from birth to the end of their 17th year, no matter where they live.

HOW TO START:

- A. Find a child, grandchild, neighbor, relative, church, friend, etc.
- B. Find children in school, daycare, 4-H, Boys & Girls Club, special events at the library, park or public garden, etc.
- C. Be a mentor/sponsor. Your club is the link between the child(ren) and the contest. You do not have to do anything on a regular basis. **Be the motivator**, contact the child periodically to see how things are going, **show interest** and **encourage** them. If possible, visit their garden or have the youth(s) or their parents send you a photo. Talk to them about gardening, tell them stories of your gardening experiences – your successes, surprises and failures.

IDEAS TO EXCITE & INSPIRE: There are so many possibilities for youth to pursue. Check out available resources – books, magazines, newspaper articles, Google, The Gardeners of America website (www.gardenersofamerica.club), etc.

Plant crops that produce underground or topside, indoors or outdoors, shade or full sun. Grow some thing very unusual, very different or very strange. Maybe pot filled with different flowers, but all the same color, or a bouquet of mixed colors. Maybe design a theme garden: Grow a rainbow, the alphabet, or flowers whose names begin with the letters of your name **EXPERIMENT, DREAM, DO YOUR OWN THING** but to sure to **HAVE FUN!**

IF YOU LIVE NEAR THE CHILD YOU ARE MENTORING: Could you go garden shopping with them? Could you do a garden-related craft or project together? Could you plan a field trip or activity that you both would enjoy?

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE: Keep the National Garden Chair (Cheri Kessen) informed about your youth gardening activities. Many youths will do more than is stated and that is fine. Some (especially the young) draw pictures; others keep a gardening diary or scrapbook. Often they send us charts or graphs. We love to have them! This helps us get to know our wonderful youth gardeners, and gives us new ideas to share.

FYI: Help us maintain a current list of youth gardening club chairs. Please email Cheri Kessen at goafortwayne@gmail.com with your club's information. We also have a club award for Youth Gardening.