

YOUTH GARDENING

HANDBOOK



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YOUTH GARDENING HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

The youth of today are the adults of tomorrow, so if we want a future where gardening is important, where flowers and vegetables are important to our well-being, where the environment is cared for, then we must interest our young people in the joy of gardening.

The future of our Clubs is in the gardening hands and green thumbs of today's children. Therefore, every affiliated club should have a Youth Gardening Committee with a chairman. This committee sets up the Youth Gardening Program and works throughout the year on various activities in Youth Gardening.

PURPOSE

To encourage youth, from birth through age 18, to become interested in gardening, to learn the joy and benefits of working with the soil, and to make them aware of the environment and its requirements for a better and cleaner America.

OBJECTIVES

1. To develop a positive attitude about gardening in our young people.
2. To assist young people to develop new gardening skills.
3. To build confidence and good work habits through gardening.
4. To motivate an awareness of environmental problems and establish programs involving youth in cleaning-up projects, beautification projects with lawns and flowers, and maintenance activities of public areas, communities and homes.
5. To develop good citizenship and socially desirable behavior in schools, public places and homes.

ORGANIZATION OF THE YOUTH GARDENING PROGRAM

TGOA/MGCA CLUBS vary in size, members' ages and locality. Some clubs are very large and have younger members who can put together a big project for the youth and have many interested, adult helpers. Other clubs have older members who do not have the health for large youth projects. Many members-at-large would still like to be involved in some way by sharing their knowledge and helping the youth.



Therefore, each club is encouraged to work with the youth in a way that is productive, meaningful and encouraging. The entire club does not have to be involved. If a member or two would like to mentor a child through an activity or a project, that would be great. Any child can participate in the youth programs as long as they are sponsored or mentored by a TGOA/MGCA member.

So, where do you find the youth?

- your children and grandchildren
- relatives and neighbors
- children of your friends and workmates
- schools, after-school care groups, day care centers, preschools
- libraries, church youth groups, inner city groups
- 4-H, YMCA, Boy and Girl Scouts, Big Brothers–Big Sisters

Some clubs team up with 4-H, Scouts and schools to do joint projects and activities.

Your club will have to decide what type of **gardening program** to propose. Home gardens? A beautification garden at a hospital, school or community building? Individual plots at a community garden?

Look at your **available manpower** and how many youth you can work with comfortably, then figure out what projects you will encourage. Will they grow vegetables and flowers for exhibitions and fairs? Will they enter special horticultural shows? (Appendix B includes pointers for showing.) What about contests in your community or club, such as Big Tomato?

Decide if there will be **membership requirements** for Youth Gardeners.

If it is felt that a small **fee** must be charged to the participants, take care that no youth is kept from gardening because of financial hardship. Most clubs can handle the expenses of the Youth Gardening Program. Sometimes, community-minded groups will help with funding.

Many seed suppliers will provide seeds free for the purpose. Dealers are often more than happy to provide the club with packets of **seeds** that have been leftover at the end of the year. Use only seeds that have an acceptable second year germination. Consideration should be given to the age of the youth when obtaining seeds. A very young boy or girl will not want seeds that take a long time to germinate or take a lot of care. Older students are more willing to learn some of the finer points of gardening and can even act as mentors for the younger children.

It is important to get **permission from parents** or guardians for the youth gardener to participate in the program. Make up a form that includes the youth's name, address, phone, age, birth date and the parents' names. Make sure there is a place to include any allergies or handicaps the child might have. Who to reach and how in case of an

emergency is also important. Appendix A is set up to be copied and given to parents and youth gardeners for their assistance.

A **background check** needs to be done on anyone and everyone working with children. The TGOA/MGCA policy relating to club responsibility for persons working in youth programs is as follows:

Individual clubs affiliated with TGOA/MGCA will require members who are working with youth, in programs sponsored by our organization, to submit to a background check for registered sex offenders. The background checks must be done with your local sheriff's department.

The insurance consultant for TGOA/MGCA recommends that "each local club should have **liability** coverage for premises owned, leased, or used and any activities during the year such as monthly meetings, selling flowers, flower displays or exhibits, volunteer work at different community properties or projects, hosting conventions or meetings for the national association and any other activities a local club could be involved in." It is worthwhile to check with the community officials concerning liability for community gardening activities.



ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

1. Hold planning meetings with the youth. Discuss planning the garden, preparing the garden, soil preparation, fertilizing and lime. Planting the garden. Care of the garden. Harvesting. Distribute seeds, bulbs, corms and/or plants.
2. Pair a garden member up with a youth gardener. The club member should visit the gardens of the youth at the beginning of the season, occasionally during the season and near harvest. Take pictures of the progress. They should be available for questions and encouragement.
3. Early in the year, take a trip to a gardening center.
4. Invite parents to come with the youth gardener to an educational session with gardening films or slides or have interesting hands-on speakers. Follow the presentation with a question and answer period and include refreshments. (This is also a good way to increase your club membership by getting parents involved.)
5. If community gardens or beautification projects are involved, garden club members should be responsible for overseeing the project. Liability should be considered in these instances.
6. A summer picnic or a fall hot dog roast provided by the club for the youth gardeners and their parents is a nice activity and yet another way to get parents involved and interested in becoming a new member of your club.

7. Have a club flower and vegetable exhibition for your members and the youth gardeners to participate in and enjoy.
8. Hold a garden and plant auction for your club members, guests, parents and youth gardeners. Anything related to gardens can be contributed.
9. Give out a report form for the youth gardeners to list their results on such things as: seed germination, plant growth, the amount of harvest and whatever else you would like to add. Then end the growing season with a culminating activity sharing pictures and stories of their successes and failures. Let them report on their results they have been charting and give awards and certificates to the youth gardeners. This would be another chance to invite the parents too.
10. In the very early spring, study trees and why they are so important to the environment. Have youth gardeners plant a tree on Arbor Day.

Some clubs are large enough to divide the youth gardeners into groups such as:

Tender Sprouts	0 – 6	Saplings	7 – 10
Green Thumbs	11 – 14	Super Spades	15 – 18



HOW NATIONAL CAN HELP YOU

National offers a Big Pumpkin and Giant Sunflower contest every year. Details and directions are on the Youth Gardening Page on the website. You can call national headquarters to request ribbons “Everyone Is a Winner” to give out in your clubs to those youth participating in this contest. These ribbons are available for a small cost of 50 cents each which includes shipping and handling.

There also are contests for container gardens. This will help youths who do not have access to larger spaces for planting but who want to garden. Watch the website for further details.

Another new project in development is a youth gardening patch. Individuals will be able to get directions that will take them through a complete gardening experience. When they have completed and returned everything, they will receive the national logo patch.

You can borrow books and videos from the national headquarters for your use. You’ll also find tons of helpful information on the web.

The Youth Gardening page on the TGOA/MGCA website has more ideas and projects for you. The more you share what you are doing with youth gardeners the more the web site will grow. Send your information to Cheri Kessen, national chair of Youth Gardening, at ckessen2001@yahoo.com

APPENDIX A



NOTES TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF YOUTH GARDENERS

If you have a child who is interested in having a garden or being involved in a gardening activity here are some things to remember:

1. Keep this the child's project, let him/her do the work; you be the adviser.
2. Show interest in the child's garden or project and give encouragement.
3. Take pictures.
4. Help the child keep a journal; younger gardeners can draw pictures of their garden or project in a notebook.
5. If the child will have a personal garden in your yard or at a community garden, go over the garden plans, design and development, making sure it is age-appropriate.
6. When supplies, seeds and plants are ready, watch at least part of the planting. Do not do the planting for the child.
7. Continue your interest during the remainder of the garden season. Remember, youth need encouragement, reminders and constructive criticism to succeed.
8. Keep interest in gardening by occasionally mentioning the fun of watching things grow.
9. Praise the products of the garden, whether they be flowers or garden vegetables. Use some for the table, but save the best for horticulture shows and exhibits.
10. Attend the meetings at which your child's efforts are evaluated and he/she receives recognition for the completed garden project. Youth need to have their successes recognized.
11. After the garden is finished and harvested, keep the interest and excitement going by growing a houseplant, herbs or vegetables in a hanging basket or containers positioned indoors under lights or on a windowsill.
12. Take you child on a nature hike, a tree or bird walk, to a zoo, to a butterfly garden, visit a conservatory, botanical garden, arboretum and/or aviary. These make fun family outings and enhance a child's appreciation of nature and our world.

LABELING OF VARIETIES IS A NECESSITY

When you have seeds, plants and/or bulbs ready to plant, they are to be labeled as to variety. It is of utmost importance that these names be written on labels for garden use and also written in a journal or paper which is carefully filed for future use. If the label in the garden is lost or misplaced, the saved copy will specify the exact variety. Labeling helps in making exhibits, it provides the grower and the public information about that variety. It is important to name your exhibits for a show.

GARDEN CARE REMINDERS

1. Cultivating, mulching and weeding go hand in hand in making a successful garden.
2. For succession crops in your garden watch the planting dates on your seed envelopes. Thin the crops.
3. During dry weather soak your garden, don't just sprinkle.
4. Do not over water if plants are in containers or potted. Cultivate or loosen soil surface, cut back some stems, disbud when required and keep dead flowers picked off whenever possible.

HORTICULTURE SHOWS

The showing or displaying of vegetables and flowers produced by the youth gardener is a fitting culmination to a garden program. It gives the youth gardener the opportunity to experience the satisfaction that comes with success. It presents a situation for the development of leadership in organizing and managing an exhibit. It is rewarding, as ribbons and awards are given by accredited judges for exhibits and special prizes are provided to the best exhibits.

The exhibit should be named with the Genus, species and variety or cultivar. A common name may be given also. The name is most often needed for a top award to be awarded. The schedule will give the number of plant material needed for an exhibit. When you need more than one, it is important to remember uniformity (same in size, shape, color, etc) must be considered.

USING VEGETABLES

Vegetables should be harvested at the proper time to get the best flavor and most food value. Root crops such as beets, carrots and radishes, if harvested too soon, will not have developed their full nutritional value and if allowed to get too old will be tough and of

poor value. To get the best taste, vegetables should be used soon after harvesting. Tomatoes should be allowed to develop a full red color on the vine.

Much nutritional value of vegetables may be lost in handling and preparing them. Using the following instructions should help:

1. Do not crush or bruise vegetables. Keep cold until ready to prepare them.
2. Trim off leaves of crops such as beets, carrots and kohlrabi when harvesting to prevent shriveling. Peel only when necessary.
3. Vegetables, to be peeled or chopped raw, should be prepared just before using.
4. Cook all vegetables quickly in as little water as possible and only until the vegetable is nearly tender. Steaming is best.
5. To save vitamins when cooking vegetables, do not add soda or too much salt or stir more than necessary.
6. Some vitamins and minerals dissolve in cooking water. Save and serve with vegetables or use in soups or gravies.

USING FLOWERS

Flowers are attractive in the garden, but they also are useful to cut for indoor decoration. To get the most bloom for outdoor use, the plants should be pruned by pinching out the tops (tips) when the plants are 5" to 6" high. Flowers such as marigolds and zinnias will have longer stems and larger blooms if they are disbudded. When the flower buds begin to develop, pinch out all side buds on the stem, leaving one flower to develop. Disbudded stems are easier to arrange and produce better specimens for exhibiting.

The following pointers will help lengthen the time flowers last:

1. Use a sharp knife to cut flowers, as this tool is less likely to bruise or crush the stem. Early morning or late evening is the best time to cut.
2. After flowers are brought in from the garden, cut the stem ends again, under water if possible, and on a definite slant. This will permit greater water absorption. Do this each day to prevent plugging of stem water tubes.
3. Place cut flowers in warm water after cutting from garden plant. Keep in a cool place several hours before arranging or for show.
4. It is important that faded blooms be removed from the plants in the garden. If the plant is permitted to go to seed, flower production tends to stop.



APPENDIX B



POINTS FOR SHOWING AT HORTICULTURE SHOWS

VEGETABLES, FLOWERS, and FRUITS can be exhibited at fairs and horticulture shows. The Vegetable Sections are always very popular with spectators, especially at harvest time. **Remember to provide the name of plant material on your show label.**

When vegetables and fruits are exhibited, they are shown in **their prime**, and **at the time they are best for eating.**

Bean – same variety, uniform in maturity, diameter and good color, the same length and curve of bean pod. Best quality and flavor is just before swelling of the seeds is noticeable. The pod stem should be attached.

Beet – Trim leave tops to 1½ to 2", uniform in color and size, trim tap root to 2", no secondary roots, no blemishes, same variety.

Broccoli – full head, not less than 3" in diameter, head should be tight, buds uniform in size with no color showing. Stems should solid and cut 5" from top of head. No insect damage.

Brussels Sprout – neatly trimmed with ¼" stem, uniform, not less than 1" in diameter, color green, with no loose leaves. Desirable size is 1½ to 2" in diameter.

Cabbage – heads solid, cut stem square 1/2" from tap root, course outer leaves removed, **but do not peel excessively to remove green color, or red** as the case may be, **unless it is Savoy type.** No insect damage.

Cantaloupe/Muskmelon – pick when ripe as indicated by a slightly sunken stem scar, and stem pulls easily from fruits. Fruit should be round, good size, and color as to variety. It should be firm, with no soft spots visible.

Carrot – Trim leaves to 1½" and tap root to 1". Should be uniform in size, shape, color, same length, free from secondary roots, not bleached, free from green at shoulders, and should be brittle.

Cauliflower – head should be at least 4" in diameter, leaves removed except to protect head. The head should be smooth, dense, uniform pure white or purple, cut stem square ½" from tap root.

Cucumber – sizes should be uniform for the variety, round, not much curve, end blunt, not pointed, and ½" of stem attached. **Do not wax**, but clean with a soft brush to avoid reducing natural bloom. Bloom is its garden growing color. Do not remove spines. Be sure to enter in proper class whether slicers or pickles. Slicers: 1 1/2 to 2" in diameter and length no longer than 10". Pickling length: Sweet (3 –3½"); Dill (4–5½").

Eggplant – medium size, mature, no irregular shape, color deep purple or whatever color, glossy, not dull, no bronze or green–white streaks, blossom scar should be small and circular, green calyx with 1½" stem attached. Do not wash, but use a soft brush to clean. It must be firm.

Endive – minimum diameter is 10", fringed, and broad leaf – separate classes, outer leaves green, centers creamy white and prominent, root cut ½", regular arrangement of leaves, with no removal gape, must be fresh, tender, and crisp.

Kale – minimum spread of 12" or more diameter, uniform color, leave curled, and uniform spread, roots cut ½" square, no wilting or insect damage.

Kohlrabi – Stems of leaves trimmed to 3", roots trimmed to ½", color pale green or light purplish according to variety, smooth, flesh firm, crisp, and tender. The skin should be firm, not tough.

Lettuce – types are crisp heads, butterhead, Cos, and loose-leaf. Head lettuce should be 6" in diameter, except Bibb should be 3" to 4". Heads should be tight but soft, intense color varies with variety, and should have bright appearance, trim roots square to ½", outer damaged leaves removed, check for soft-rots in the center. No signs of insects.

Lima Bean – same variety, well grown with at least 4 seeds showing in pod, uniform in size and shape, equal maturity, pod should be flexible, remain green, no tendency to yellowing, smooth with no vacant spaces, free from blemishes, the pod stem attached. Shown only in pod form, unless shelled dried form.

Okra – pods should be tender, they should be uniform in size, shape, and straight with stem of 1". Good color as to variety.

Onion – should be uniform in size, shape, color, and same variety. Spanish should be at least 5" in diameter, others can be 2" and over, either globular or flat in shape, some are bottle shape, with small necks, trim roots to ½", no indication of splitting or doubling. Harvest 2–3 weeks before exhibiting and trim stem 1 to 1½" so it can dry. You will be **penalized if skin is peeled too much exposing fleshy portion**. Bulbs should be clean, free from rot, sprouting and insect damage.

Green Onion – trim leaves to 4–6" above white part and trim roots to ½". Width should be ½" at joint where white/green meet.

Parsnip – should be uniform in size and shape, 1½" to 2½" in diameter at crown, smooth, uniformly tapered. Trim tap root to ½" and remove side roots, color light cream and small core, with no skin blemishes or abrasion.

Peppers – should be uniform in size, shape and color. Some are thin and long, or blocky, or oblong. They may be shown in green or colored states, but **not mixed**. No evidence of sun scald. Smooth, crisp and bright with ¾" stem for hot peppers and stem cut to shoulder of sweet peppers.

Popcorn – husks removed, except ornamental or strawberry corn which the husk should be attached and pulled back to stem end. Color, shape, size should be uniform. Ears vary as to variety. Ears well filled, no gaps, and free from insect damage.

Potato – numerous shapes, sizes, and colors. Only mature specimens, smooth, free from knobby irregularities, eyes shallow, and clean. Dig ten to fifteen days before exhibiting to allow time to cure. Wash carefully and dry quickly. No greening of skin, must be uniform, with no evidence of disease, no skin broken, and average size.

Pumpkin – There are many sizes and shapes. The ribs should be deep, uniform, no flat spots, or with skin breaks or damage from any cause. Trim the stem to 1–2". **Be sure to enter in the right class, if it is for HEAVIEST or for PERFECTION. READ SCHEDULE CAREFULLY.**

Radish – must be fresh, crisp, and bright in color. Trim tops to 1" and trim tap roots to 1". No skin breaks or bug damage.

Squash – many number of summer and winter varieties. All, with few exceptions, are exhibited mature, proper sizes, and shape as to variety. They must be uniform, with no skin breaks. Summer squash varieties are **not mature**, as this is the way they are used most readily, although some mature one are baked. Must be free from blemish or damage, Trim attached stem to 1–2" Note: True pumpkins have ridged stems, while True squash have smooth stems.

Sweet Corn – Select mature ears that are well-filled to the tip. Ears should have straight rows of milky juicy kernels with no gaps. Trim silks to 1". Trim shank to ½" Husk is cut away on one side 2–2½" to expose kernels.

Sweet Potato – shape and color vary as to variety. Uniform in size and shape, free from irregularities, blemishes, or any other damage, with skin unbroken. Sweet potatoes should be dug two weeks before exhibiting so as to cure, should be firm and clean. May be carefully washed and promptly dried.

Tomato – slicing tomatoes are large and varies color (red, pink, yellow, and white). There are some blends, but enter as to variety. Shapes vary, must be uniform in color, size, and shape, fully ripe, but firm, free from blemishes, with no evidence of cracks, or rot. The calyx must be in place with stem removed, no bulges, lobes, or irregularities. **Read schedule carefully, especially requirements for miniature,** which have almost same requirements as above.

Turnip – Trim tops to ½". Should be minimum size about 1 3/4" diameter, trim tap root to ½", good color, bright, free from blemish, uniformity is important. Some are white and some purple skinned or a combination of color. They should be crisp, free from disease.

Watermelon – should be mature and typical as to variety, also in size, color, shape, and markings. Shape should be uniform, symmetrical without tapered ends or bottlenecks. 1" stem attached to avoid bleeding or prevent rot, no decay showing, no sun-scald, or insect damage. Immature specimens are hard, and greenish in appearance. Melons should not be washed but carefully cleaned with soft cloth.

POINTERS FOR FLOWERS – CUT AND POTTED

Aster – is an annual. Watch for development more rapidly from one side than the other, which is a fault. Stems should be strong to support the flower without sagging. Uniform in size, shape, free from disease, or insect marks, and must have good color. If buds are evident, none should show color for the show, or it will be disqualified, as if a bud should show color, it means two or more blooms per class, when it calls for only one.

Chrysanthemum – to be shown disbudded, or as a spray or as a potted plant. Must be true to form, size, and color. Evidence of very recent disbudding is a fault. Foliage must be clean, and flower must be clear in color and with no sign of over-maturity.

Dahlia – to be top blooms (if frost does not arrive before show) sizes, colors, and shapes are to conform as to variety and schedule. Blooms must be symmetrical, no multiple centers, or oval centers. Center of bloom should be round, tight, with some bloom to come. Damaged or spent petals removed from the back will be a fault, although some leeway may be allowed. Nodding and down facing blooms is a fault. Two sets of leaves attached to stem is sometimes required. **Read schedule as to requirement.** Foliage is necessary for all varieties.

Gladiolus – must be generally judged according to the North American Gladiolus Council. What to look for is size and number of flowers. The 100 size should have at least 15 buds, with 5 open, 4 in color, flower-head 16" to 24". The 200 size should have 18 to 22 buds, with 6 open, 4 in color, flower-head 22" to 26". The 300 size should have 22 to 26 buds, with 8 to 10 open, 5 in color, with flower-head of 30" minimum. **Stem length below flowers should be 35% to 45% of total length of the specimen.** Shown without foliage, stem straight, can have a slight curve at top, all buds face the same way, and regularly spaced. Spike should taper gracefully, with good clean colors, with no variations between florets. Form and substance is good evidence of culture. Watch undersize of florets as to variety.

Marigold – very prominent good foliage, uniform blooms. Open centers are faults. Flowers should face up, with buds showing being a fault. When schedule calls for one bloom, and there are side-shoots, some showing color it will be disqualified and calls for disbud. No single centers or washed-out look of the flowers. Disbud early, as this gives the main bloom a better chance to grow larger. Stem or spray must have foliage. Length of stem is necessary, as it shows good culture.

Zinnia – apply the same for Marigolds, except Zinnias are more apt to **mildew**, a fungus disease. Watch size of flowers as to variety. There can be singles and doubles as to variety, in both large and small or dwarf. Petals should be regularly arranged, with overlap neatly arranged. Good depth as to size of bloom is important. Color should be clear, not washed out, or muddiness in some shades. Watch insects and blemished leaves or petals of flowers.

Rose – are shown according to the American Rose Society. Enter according to schedule. Weak stems or too short are faults. Double centers will disqualify. Singles should be shown wide open. Other bloom should be $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ open, the stage depending upon the number of petals of the variety. Center showing in double bloom will not qualify for judging. Clear colors are important and streaked petals or bluing, or green petal blotches are faults. There should be at least two sets of 5 leaves attached to the stem. Watch for fungus and disease on roses.