

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome from the California Head Start Association	2
Getting Started	3
• Step 1 – Form a “local” garden committee.	
• Step 2 – Define the purpose and objectives of your garden.	
• Step 3 – Lay out your students’ gardening activities.	
• Step 4 – Define a year-round garden plan.	
Head Start Standards and Outcomes	4
Choosing a Garden Site for Success	5
• Sun	
• Water Source	
• Soil	
• Accessibility	
Designing Your Garden	7
Growing in Raised Beds	7
• Fall/Early Spring & Spring/Summer 4' x 4' Raised Garden Planting Plans	
What and When to Plant	10
• Annual Vegetable Planting Guide for Children’s Nutrition	
• Notes to Remember When Working with Children’s Gardens	
• Basic Guide for Growing Vegetables in Children’s Nutrition Gardens	
Safety and Toxic Plants	14
• How to Avoid Plant Poisoning	
Planting Seedlings	15
• General Guides for Transplanting Seedlings	
• Newspaper Pots: Best Way for Kids to Transplant Seedlings	
• Growing Seeds in a Newspaper Pot	
Best Way for Kids to Care for and Water Plants	18
• Feeding	
• Watering	
• Weeding	
• Plant Rotation	
• Mulching	
• Label Your Plants	
Composting	20
• What to Compost	
• How to Start a Compost Bin	
• Keeping Pests Away	
Parent Involvement	22
Parent Education	23
Nutrition	23
• USDA Food Guide Pyramid	
• Fruits and Vegetables for Health	
Online Resources	25
Children’s Books – Food for Thought	26
Head Start Garden Project Committee	29

DESIGNING YOUR GARDEN

Once you have chosen the right location, you are ready to start designing your garden. The first thing you'll want to do is decide what kind of garden you want. There are many ideas for garden themes that can be incorporated into curriculum and classroom activities. Some suggestions for garden themes are:

- ❖ **Alphabet Garden** – Plant a garden of fruits and vegetables that begin with every letter of the alphabet.
- ❖ **Pizza Garden** - Grow a pizza garden filled with your favorite toppings, such as tomatoes, sweet peppers, onions, jalapeños, basil, oregano, thyme, and parsley.
- ❖ **Companion Garden** - Position plants together that are known to have a beneficial effect on neighboring plants by discouraging pests and diseases or improving growth.
- ❖ **Native American Garden** - Plants such as squash, potatoes, pumpkins, gourds, and corn can be used to show the traditional diet of Native Americans.

After you have selected a theme, it is time to draw up a plan for your garden. Invite the children to participate by asking them to draw their own diagram of what they think the garden should look like. Encourage them to draw a picture by pretending they are looking at the garden from a bird's eye view. Mark on your diagram where all the trees and large shrubs are located. Be sure to keep your garden as far away from them as possible because they create shade and will steal nutrients from your garden. The placement of vegetables should run north to south to ensure they get the best sun exposure. The tallest vegetables, such as corn, vine tomatoes, and peas, should go in the back. The shorter vegetables, such as carrots, salad vegetables, and onions, should go in the front so they will not be shaded. Identify the placement of the vegetables with labels. Make sure to include a path so the children have plenty of room to walk when they are working in and exploring the garden.

GROWING IN RAISED BEDS

Provided by North Bay Children's Center (see our online resource for examples http://caheadstart.org/CHSA%20_GEL_GARDEN_GUIDE_06.pdf)

Raised beds are the best growing medium for vegetables in small- to medium-sized gardens. They can be intensively gardened. Traditional row farming is for tractors and for people growing large single crops.

General Benefits of Raised Beds

- ❖ Beds do not become waterlogged.
- ❖ Beds warm up more quickly in spring.
- ❖ Beds are less likely to be walked on.
- ❖ Beds allow for conservation of water and fertilizer.
- ❖ One can grow so much more in a limited space.

