

## Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Children's Garden

Since 1914, Brooklyn Botanic Garden has been a leader in educating children in garden settings, and its Trees and Saplings program for kids two to four years old and their caregivers is no exception.

Preschool gardeners take an active role in planting seeds and seedlings, watering -- it's no surprise this is a favorite activity! - weeding, harvesting and at times sampling produce like lettuce, cherry tomatoes and raspberries before leaving the field.

Beside hands-on horticulture, young learners discover the natural world, said Family Programs Manager Pattie Hulse.

Children are immersed in the garden ecosystem, where they observe and begin to understand big-science topics like pollination, life cycles, seasons and composting. "Putting together a vermi-compost bin and watching over time as rotting veggies and shredded newspaper are turned into compost by our hard-working worm friends to be used in the garden is magical but very real, too," said Hulse.

Gardens offer a rich opportunity to explore concepts that have deep relevance to preschoolers lives, she explained. They learn social skills, such as taking turns and sharing; how to care for living things; the concept of time through the natural rhythms of seasons and life cycles; and the foundations of nutrition and healthy eating habits.

"Working as a team to prepare and taste food they've grown themselves is a powerful way to expand young children's palates," said Hulse. Dinosaur kale was a huge hit this summer among preschoolers — The name was intriguing, they could harvest the leaves themselves with safety-scissors, and simple recipes made it taste good, she recalled.

Learn a lot more about the year-round Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Children Garden:  
<http://www.bbg.org/edu/children/childrensgarden.html>







Photos: Brooklyn Botanic Garden Children's Garden Program 2009