



Welcome to Nutrition BEST Gardening! At Nutrition BEST, we're working to make healthy food and healthy lifestyles available to everyone. In this newsletter, you will find projects, ideas, and resources for gardening with kids of all ages (even the very youngest!) Watch for fun gardening activities coming to your Early Head Start, and **let's grow together!**

Project of the Month: Plant Some Strawberries!

Did you know that you can grow your own strawberries in a flowerpot or other container? It's fun and easy to do!

Strawberry plants are inexpensive and easy to find at a nursery or garden center. For the best value, look for plants in a "six pack" — six little plants in connected plastic cells. Some stores also sell individual plants.



You can use any **container** to plant in, as long as it is at least 6 inches wide (any smaller, and it will dry out too fast.) To make the best use of space, look for "**strawberry pots**" or stacked planters (like the one above). Or plant in regular flowerpots, or even recycled milk jugs or other containers — just don't forget to poke some **drainage holes** in the bottom! Use a good-quality **potting mix** (special soil for potted plants).

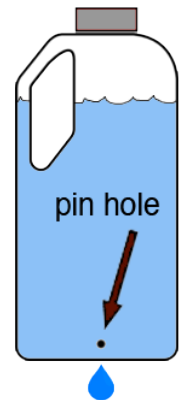


Make sure to **water** your plants regularly. Check them every day until you know how quickly they dry out. Strawberries like at least 6 hours of **sun** a day. Watch for flowers and little green berries to form. When the berries turn bright, shiny red, they are ready to pick and eat!

In The Garden: June and July

June and July are busy months in the garden! It's a good time to plan and build a new garden for late summer or fall, or plant new container fruits and veggies.

Plants are thirsty! As the weather heats up, you might need to water plants once or even twice a day. You can make a watering jug that will slowly water a thirsty plant all day. Take a clean milk jug or plastic drink bottle and poke a small hole in the bottom with a pin or nail. Fill with water, put the lid on loosely, and set the jug on the soil near your plant. The water should slowly drip water into the soil until all the water is gone.



It isn't too late to plant warm-season crops! You can grow beans, cucumbers, and summer squash from seeds. For tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant, look for veggie "starts" — small plants — at a nursery or garden center. They will grow quickly in the summer heat! (Just make sure they have plenty of water.)

Don't have a garden yet? Fall is a great time to start a garden, and it's never too early to start planning. Think about what kind of garden you would like to grow: a container garden? A raised bed? Where will you put it? For container gardens, look for summer sales on pots and soil. If you will plant in the ground, you can start amending your soil with compost, leaves, or other organic matter.



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Gardening Fun: Sunflower House

Have you ever seen a sunflower plant? They come in all sizes, from a few feet high to over 12 feet tall! Sunflowers are one of the easiest flowers to grow, with big, easy-to-plant seeds and lots of cheerful flowers that “follow” the sun through the sky. But instead of planting them in a row, how about growing a sunflower house to play in?

To plant a sunflower house, first pick your location. You will need a patch of good soil with 6 to 8 hours of sun exposure a day. Decide where your “walls” will go, then put a stake at each corner and on either side of the door. (See the picture at right.) Tie a piece of string between the stakes, to show where the walls will go. Then prepare the soil along the string line by digging in some compost. Smooth the soil with a rake or trowel.

Now it’s time to plant your sunflowers! You can use almost any variety, but very tall sunflowers may need additional staking for support when they get big. Plant the seeds 4 to 6 inches apart, following the directions on the seed packet. You can also plant morning glories, beans, or other vines in between the sunflowers — they will “climb” up the walls!

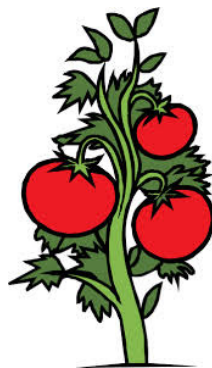


Water your seeds daily with a watering can or a gentle hose nozzle, being careful not to wash them out of the ground. The seeds should start to sprout in 5 to 10 days. If your sunflowers have good soil and plenty of water, they will grow quickly! When the plants are a couple of feet high, you can fertilize them with an organic flower fertilizer, following the package directions.

Put a picnic blanket in the middle of your house, and enjoy the view of tall, beautiful, blooming sunflowers!

Did You Know?

The scientific name for the **tomato** is *Lycopersicon*, which comes from Latin and means “wolf peach.” But tomatoes originally came from Peru, where their Nahuatl Aztec name, “*xitomatl*,” meant “plump thing with a belly button!”



The **rose family** of plants, in addition to flowers, gives us apples, pears, plums, cherries, almonds, peaches, and apricots.

An old English tradition is to plant large patches of **thyme** as playgrounds for fairies.

Ancient Greeks and Romans thought that **basil** would only grow if you screamed and shouted while planting the seeds.

The world record-holding **watermelon** weighed more than 350 lbs!

Recipe: Tomato and Peach Salsa

Yield: 4-6 servings **Time:** 20 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1 cup tomato, diced
- 1 cup fresh peaches, peeled and diced
- 1 small or 1/2 medium red onion, diced
- 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, chopped
- Juice of 2 limes
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 or 2 jalapeño or Serrano peppers
- 1 teaspoon salt



Directions:

1. Stir together all ingredients in a bowl.
2. Serve immediately or refrigerate before serving. Flavors will be even better if refrigerated overnight.



Nutrition BEST

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