

How Does Your Garden Grow?



I didn't mean to be a gardener. Somehow it just happened -or did it? My earliest memories of gardening were the ones of an annoyed teen being forced to help dig and build beds for a large succulent garden that would one day become the front yard for a LifeWays center in San Diego set in an organic garden environment. The seeds of working with the soil, plants, and seasons were subtly planted in my soul by the very act of helping my parents to tend their (our) garden.

Since then, working in the garden with and for the children in my care has become one of the most life giving and nourishing activities in my personal life and teaching. Our garden is the outward expression of my (and they) tending my (our) soul(s). The flowers, bugs, seeds and such provide endless hours of curriculum for the children and me to share over the course of a year. In fact, the life of our garden is built into the life and rhythm of our program, and being in the garden and seasons as the largest part of our day has reduced our "nature table" inside our classroom to a small shelf. Our garden IS our nature table! Beyond planting and harvesting our herbs, fruits and vegetables, working with the "fruits of our labor" has become the largest source of "practical" crafting in our program.

Here are some of our seasonal favorites. You can see photos of these crafts and dishes on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.113411198702448.5971.100001007...>



Fall:

- ~Dried corn kernel necklaces
- ~Pumpkin patch
- ~Fall leaves, felted flowers & berry garlands around pumpkins for table center pieces
- ~Fresh corn muffins & bread
- ~Apple brown bettie
- ~Homemade dried apple rings
- ~Lantern making with leaves

Winter:

- ~Pomanders
- ~Swags recycled from our winter garden
- ~Pinecone elves
- ~Pressed flowers onto candles

Spring:

- ~Wheatgrass Easter basket bedding~Veggie and flower sprouts in eggshells
- ~Living roof birdhouses
- ~Pressed flower watercolor book marks

Summer:

- ~Hand harvested lavender wreaths with wool angels
- ~Build your ollas
- ~Plant dying
- ~Plant and “reset” your play yard and garden

Tips for a beautiful child friendly garden:

Water:

This year we built “olla” for each of our garden beds. We aren’t able to be sure that the children do a thorough watering each time but they have no problem filling up our “Mayan” drip irrigation pots and covering them with a small stone to prevent mosquitos. In addition to the ollas, we have a designated watering day with the children and also water one day on the weekend. We water twice a week during the winter and three times during the summer. Pots may need water more often.

Plants:

We prefer to plant drought tolerant, local natives & food plants. We also planted varieties of herbs and edible flowers that self seed and propagate easily and attract birds, bees and butterflies. We re-plant when necessary and only border off areas from the children when new plants are being established.

Fertilizer:

We are currently using compost and coffee grounds. We also use a fish emulsion when we close for breaks so that the smell has a day or two to dissipate.

Love:

I do sing or hum to the plants. Why not. It’s reassuring for the children to hear where we are in the garden if they can stay in contact with us even if it’s only with their ears.

Bio Dynamic Calendar Planting:

I’ve had four years of Waldorf/LifeWays training over the years and more workshops than I can shake a stick at. With all of my fingers in various plant pots I didn’t get into the whys and where for alls of bio dynamics. Since I’m such a busy bee I thought it more time efficient to conduct a very simple experiment. I planted some of my veggies on the days indicated on the BD calendar and others not. The ones planted on the days indicated in the BD calendar out performed the others hands down. For now, that’s all I need to know. I recommend using the BD calendar to coordinate and plan your planting if you can do it.

To take a peek at some of the flowers in our garden, visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.113411198702448.5971.100001007...>

Or www.AChildsGardenofThyme.com

In closing, I can tell when I don’t get into the garden enough. It shows in the children and me. When I’m truly busy with the work of the garden, I feel more refreshed and alive. The children are also noticeably healthier. They are more at peace in their play and often become interested on their own in what I am doing.



It's just like anything else, if you add tending to your "garden" to your daily or weekly activities regularly, it will become part of your habit body. And remember....

Tending the soil of the soul is good for anyone and everyone around you!

Your sister in soil,

Bianca Lara

A Child's Garden of Thyme

LifeWays North America- San Diego

In addition to being the Director of [A Child's Garden of Thyme](#), A LifeWays Center for Young Children, Bianca is a staff and faculty member of the [Waldorf Institute of Southern California - San Diego](#) and a board member of AWME (the [Association of Waldorf Music Educators](#)). Bianca is equally passionate about LifeWays, servant leadership, and Waldorf School governance. While not working with young children, administrating, teaching adults, or facilitating workshops, she plays jazz music professionally with the Gypsy Groove, a hot jazz band in Southern California