

Great Herbs for Kids

The following is meant to be a general guide of herbs that are recommended for growing with children or placing in a children's garden. For more detailed information, consult a reliable book on herb gardening, your local extension service, or your local garden center.

Lemon Balm – *Melissa officinalis*

Lemon Balm is easy to grow and maintain. In fact, take care with this plant because it is a prolific grower and can easily get out of control in the garden. Therefore, it is recommended that this herb be planted in a container. If you intend to put Lemon Balm in the ground be sure to remove the flower heads before they set seed. Children will enjoy the lemony fragrance of this plant as well as the texture of its leaves. Lemon Balm is easy to start from seed, making it an ideal pick for seed starting projects with your children.

Light: full sun or partial shade

Zone: hardy to zone 5

Growth: perennial

Use: culinary, crafts

Culture: well-drained, medium rich soil, keep moist

Landscape use: borders, containers

Sensory benefits: smell, touch, taste

Sage – *Salvia* sp.

Children will take great delight in watching the butterflies, birds, and bees that are attracted to these plants. *Salvias* also have fragrant leaves and striking flowers.

Light: full sun

Use: culinary, crafts

Growth: perennial

Landscape use: borders

Soil: well-drained

Sensory benefits: smell, visual, hearing

Zone: hardy to zone 5

Good picks: *Salvia elegans* (pineapple sage), *S. officinalis* (garden sage)

Sunflower – *Helianthus annuus*

Sunflowers are often considered to somewhere between an herb and a food plant. Kids love their large, bright, cheerful flowers. They add a touch of whimsy and fun to any children's garden and they are also easy to grow.

Light: full sun

Growth: annual

Culture: well-drained soil

Use: culinary, landscaping, medicinal

Good picks: *Helianthus annuus* 'Prado Series,' *H. annuus* 'Teddy Bear,' *H. annuus* 'Russian giant'

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Lavender – *Lavandula* sp.

Lavender is a great pick for kid's because of it's fragrant leaves and flowers. The plants are known to attract birds, butterflies, and bees. Many varieties also adapt well for use in containers. In addition, the colorful flowers can be used for crafts and cooking. Lavender is durable and will endure some neglect and abuse which makes it a great choice for young children learning to garden.

Light: full sun

Culture: well-drained, alkaline soil

Growth: perennial

Zones: 5-8

Use: culinary, crafts

Sensory benefits: smell, visual

Landscape use: massed borders, containers

Good picks: *Lavandula angustifolia*, *L. angustifolia*, 'Munstead', *L. officinalis*

Lamb's Ear – *Stachys byzantina*

Lamb's ear is a great herb for touching. Children will be delighted with the soft, downy leaves. This plant is often grown more for it's foliage than its flowers. However, when they are not cut back the flower spikes are also an enjoyable addition to the garden.

Light: full sun

Zone: 4-9

Growth: perennial

Landscape use: borders

Culture: well-drained soil

Sensory benefits: touch

Chives – *Allium schoenoprasum*

Chives are a colorful, easy to grow choice for gardening with kids. The flowers and stems are edible and when dried they are great for use in crafts. In addition, they are colorful and fun for children to smell.

Light: full sun

Use: culinary, crafts

Growth: perennial

Landscape use: borders, massed plantings

Culture: well-drained,
medium rich soil

Sensory benefits: taste, smell, visual

Zone: 3-9

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Nasturtiums – *Tropaeolum majus*

Colorful flowers and fun shaped leaves make nasturtiums a great pick for growing with your children. Their seeds are also large, making them easy for small fingers to handle when planting. Children might also enjoy trying out the freshly washed, peppery tasting leaves. In addition, they are easy to grow and can attract hummingbirds to your garden.

Light: full sun

Growth: annuals, some tender perennials

Culture: well-drained, average soil

Uses: culinary

Landscape use: borders, groundcover

Sensory benefits: taste, visual

Good picks: *Tropaeolum majus* ‘Empress of India,’ *T. majus* ‘Peach Melba,’ *T. majus* ‘Moonlight’

Scented geraniums – *Pelargonium* sp.

Scented geraniums are grown mainly for their foliage because of the wonderful scents they emit when their leaves are rubbed or brushed. They come in peppermint, nutmeg, apple, strawberry, and rose -scented varieties to name a few. They work well in containers and small spaces, and can be grown successfully indoors and out. Children will enjoy the great sensory benefits that these plants provide.

Light: full sun

Zone: usually hardy to zone 9

Growth: perennials, usually hardy to zone 9

Sensory benefits: smell

Cultivation: well drained, neutral to alkaline soil, moist soil, plants can take some drought

Use: container plants, crafts, culinary (many species are not GRAS -generally recognized as safe)

Good picks: *Pelargonium odoratissimum* (apple geranium), *P. tomentosum* (peppermint geranium), *P. graveolens* (rose-scented geranium)

Lemon verbena – *Aloysia citrodora*

Lemon verbena has a pleasing lemony scent that delights children and adults alike. The scent remains long after the foliage is dried making the dried leaves a wonderful choice for potpourris.

Light: full sun to partial shade

Zone: perennial in 8-12

Growth: Perennial in zones 8-11, when exposed to frost it becomes deciduous

Culture: well-drained, medium-rich soil

Use: culinary, medicinal, landscaping

Sensory benefits: taste, smell

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Marigolds – *Calendula* sp.

Marigolds have many kid benefits. They are colorful, easy to grow, and easy to start from seed. The flowers are edible and fun to taste. They are a great choice for beginning and young gardeners because they will tolerate small amounts of abuse and neglect.

Light: full sun

Use: culinary, crafts, landscape borders

Growth: annual

Sensory benefits: visual, taste

Culture: slightly moist garden loam

Good picks: *Calendula officinalis* 'Greenheart Orange,' *C. officinalis* 'Nana Apricots & Oranges,' *C. officinalis* 'Porcupine,' *C. officinalis* 'Radio Extra Selected,' *C. officinalis* 'Touch of Red'

Mints – *Mentha* sp.

Mints offer many great choices for a children's garden. Their fragrance delights gardeners of all ages. They are prolific growers and it is recommended that they be planted in containers to keep them in check.

Light: full sun to part shade

Zone: hardy to zone 5

Growth: perennials, some annuals

Use: culinary, crafts (potpourri)

Culture: slightly moist garden loam, well-drained

Sensory benefits: taste

Good picks: *Mentha x piperita* (peppermint), *M. spicata* (spearmint), *M. suaveolens* (pineapple or apple mint)

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