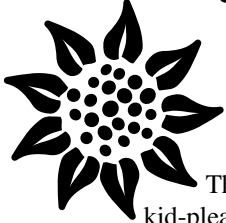




Top Five Plants for Kids



These top five plants have kid-pleasing powers and great potential for play and learning:

1. PUMPKINS

Pumpkin varieties come in fun sizes and colors. Try varieties of mini-pumpkins, like the “Munchkin,” which is perfect for little hands, or the “Jack-Be-Littles.” These grow wonderfully in tubs or barrels. Giant pumpkins need plenty of room, so if you have the space, try “Connecticut Field” or “Yankee Cow.”

If you want to try a white pumpkin, look for the mini-pumpkin “Boo” or the white “Lumina” pumpkin.

Great things to do with pumpkins:

- Paint white pumpkins with acrylic paints.
- Carve your name or a picture in the rind of a growing pumpkin (while it’s still on the vine.) Watch how the name changes as the pumpkin grows.

2. SUNFLOWER POWER

Sunflowers are most exciting plants to grow with young children. They grow fast and produce giant, dramatic flowers. Try “Russian Mammoth” or “Paul Bunyan” for towering flowers. Try “Teddy Bear” or “Elf” for two- to four-foot tall flowers, which can be grown in containers.

Great things to do with sunflowers:

- Grow a “playhouse” by planting tall sunflowers to create walls. Remember to leave a space for a door.
- Measure the stalk of the sunflower weekly. They grow so quickly that children enjoy measuring and observing the changes. Or use your camera to take pictures of sunflowers over time to show the stages of their growth.
- Shake or pick out ripe seeds from dried sunflowers. Then make crafts with them. For example, glue them onto cork coasters along with other seeds to make beautiful collages.
- Save sunflower seeds for birdfeeders. Spread peanut butter on pinecones. Roll the sticky pinecones in the sunflower seeds to cover it. Hang your pinecone outside and watch the birds enjoy!

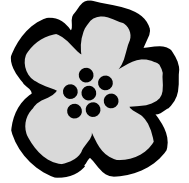
3. GOURDS

Gourds grow in amazing shapes that are great for play and art projects. Try planting a package of small ornamental mixed gourds. You will harvest a wild mix of odd shapes! Also wonderful for art projects are bottle, dipper, and bushel gourds.

Great things to do with gourds:

- Carve names or designs into gourds, while on the vine, just like pumpkins.
- Make a small hole in a dried gourd to make a birdfeeder or nesting spot.

- Make a musical instrument out of a dried gourd. Cut and string rubber bands across the opening for a unique string instrument. Dried gourds make great musical shakers.



4. SILVER DOLLARS

(sometimes called Money Plants)

Once the pink flowers have bloomed, a flat green seedpod will develop. Once the seedpod has turned brown, pick it from the stem and carefully slip off the covering to expose the beautiful white disk.

Great things to do with silver dollars:

- Use them as pretend coins.
- Paint them different colors.
- They make great pieces for sorting and counting games.

5. FOUR O’CLOCKS

Four o’clocks are flowers with old-fashioned charm. These multicolored flowers delight children with more than their beauty.

Great things to do with four o’clocks:

- Four o’clocks can turn the end of your child care day into a much-anticipated event!
- Head outdoors at 4:00pm (with adjustment for daylight saving time) and watch the blossoms open right on time everyday. Encourage the children to take time to watch for birds and bees to come for their own nectar treat.



Adapted from Sharon Lovejoy, *Roots, Shoots, Buckets and Boots*.



MAKE A HOME FOR CRICKETS

You'll need:

- Crickets
- Large glass or plastic jar
- Sand
- Spray bottle
- Rocks
- Branches
- Toilet paper tubes
- Small cap
- Carrots and apples
- Flaked fish food or kibble

The Sounds of Summer

Find a comfortable place for you and your child to lie down outside. Ask your child to close her eyes and listen carefully. How many different sounds does she hear? Ask her to tell you the sounds she hears and write them down. Listen again. Can you hear any new sounds? Try this at different times of day.

Listen for...

Long, continuous buzz
from the treetops in daytime

Clear, musical trills or
chirps in the day or night

Quiet buzzes, clicks, snaps,
or whispers in day or night

These could be...

crickets

crickets

grasshoppers and katydids

You can try to catch crickets with nets by following their distinctive chirping sound. Or you can buy crickets at a pet or bait store. Place about one inch of sand in the bottom of the jar. Mist at least one corner of the sand with water to make a wet place for crickets to lay eggs. Arrange rocks, branches, and toilet paper tubes to give the crickets places to hide. Give the crickets water daily. By squirting water into a small cap, you can make a little cricket-size water bowl. Feed the crickets slices of carrot and apples and flaked fish food or kibble for protein. Let them go free outside when you have finished learning about them.

You can make a sound like crickets do! Rub the teeth of a comb with your fingers. The cricket makes its sound in a similar way, by rubbing its wings together.



He or She? Him or Her?

Please note: In this and all Better Kid Care publications we take turns referring to children as "he" or "she." When we use he or she, we include all children.

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