Youth Gardening for Nutrition programs provide a framework to expand experiences in the garden into a nutrition education program. The three curricula below are designed to inspire learners at different stages to try more fruits and vegetables through exploration of the growing process to build a better understanding of where food comes from, as well as preparing and tasting new foods.

Why Gardening for Nutrition?

- Establishes active and engaging connections from science and math to nutrition and literacy
- Captures kids’ interest and provides opportunities for hands-on learning, inquiry, observation and experimentation
- Encourages youth to choose more fruits and vegetables over less-healthy alternatives
- Utilizes more than one style of learning and encourages students to share their knowledge with others
- Teaches nurturing skills and gives youth a sense of pride in what they have grown
- Provides opportunities for youth to help prepare recipes and taste new foods
- Teaches connections to where food comes from
- Teachers using Growing Healthy Habits report that their students are making healthier food choices for snacks, lunches and celebrations and are requesting healthier options in their school cafeteria

Growing Healthy Habits (GHH) is a nutrition and gardening education curriculum designed for grades K-5. GHH was developed by University of Maryland Extension’s Food Supplement Nutrition Education program. This curriculum has 9 units with 3 lessons and a journal activity in each unit. Lessons are geared to help students develop an appreciation of fresh vegetables while exploring the growing process, building an understanding of where food comes from and tasting fresh vegetables in recipes that they help prepare. GHH meets the Common Core Standards, Environmental Literacy and corresponds with the Maryland growing season.

Students who learn with gardening for nutrition curricula are excited to plant and try new fruits and vegetables as they learn about them. Here is what teachers and students have said…

“I can’t wait to try kohlrabi… whatever it is. I love to try new vegetables, especially when we grow them ourselves!”
- Elementary Student

“I love this gardening stuff… I can’t wait to do this at home with my family…we NEED to grow our on vegetables too!”
- Elementary Student

More than half of youth who participate in Growing Healthy Habits try one or more new vegetables for the first time.
Would you like to start using a Youth Gardening for Nutrition curricula in your classroom or after school site? These curricula are available on-line to download. Grow It, Try It, Like It and Dig In are available through Team Nutrition and Growing Healthy Habits can be downloaded at: https://eatsmart.umd.edu/resources/curricula/growing-healthy-habits

Contact Heather Buritsch for additional information at buritsch@umd.edu

Grow It, Try It, Like It! is a gardening for nutrition education curriculum that is designed for early education for ages 3-5. This curriculum uses an imaginary garden at Tasty Acres Farm to introduce children to six fruits and vegetables – peaches, strawberries, cantaloupe, spinach, sweet potatoes, and crookneck squash. This kit includes seven booklets with hands-on activities, planting and nutrition education activities that introduce MyPlate, and materials to promote home learning through parent letters with recipes, gardening ideas and tips for cooking with children.

Grow It, Try It, Like It!

Dig In! Standards-Based Nutrition Education from the Ground Up is a 10-unit curriculum designed for grades 5 and 6 with lesson activities in science, math, English, language arts and health. Students explore the world of gardening and nutrition through lessons involving growing, harvesting, tasting and learning about fruits and vegetables that can be locally grown. The curriculum kit includes Dig In! At Home Parent Booklets and posters that can be used to encourage healthy behaviors school-wide!

Dig In! Standards-Based Nutrition Education from the Ground Up

Teachers using gardening for nutrition curricula report that students are sharing their knowledge with other students, are requesting more fruits and vegetables in the cafeteria and are starting small gardens at home with their families.