

GROWING THE YOUTH GARDENING MOVEMENT



A joint effort among many in the industry is helping to get kids excited about plants.

By Beth Saunders

KidsGardening's mission is to create opportunities for kids to play, learn and grow through gardening, engaging their natural curiosity and wonder. Many garden centers share in this same mission.

Asheville, North Carolina, garden center B.B. Barns has long provided educational content in the garden center, including Saturday seminars on gardening for clients. Last fall, Haley Martin, nursery manager, and Jenna Mace, houseplants buyer, launched a program called the B.B. Barns Sprout Squad to introduce kids to the importance of horticulture and agriculture.

The mission statement of the Sprout Squad says, in part, that they wish to "instill in our children a sense of appreciation and excitement towards nature." Along with providing hands-on learning experiences for kids in their area, B.B. Barns also has begun to champion the nationwide youth gardening movement by offering financial support to the KidsGardening Youth Garden Grant.

Awarded to 25 programs across the country, the Youth Garden Grant is the nation's first and longest running grant for youth and school gardens. Launched in 1982, the grant has awarded nearly \$3 million to gardens that serve kids across the country.

Year after year, KidsGardening sees overwhelming interest from worthy youth gardening programs. For the second year in a row, the grant received over 800 applications for just 25 awards.

Support from the lawn and garden industry has been integral to the success of the grant. For the 2019 grant (awards for the 2019 grant were mailed in February 2019), Gardener's Supply Co. took the lead as a Trellis sponsor, providing significant financial support to KidsGardening for grant prize money and staff time for administration of the grant. Reviewing over 800 applications takes a significant investment of KidsGardening staff time.

"Gardener's Supply was founded in 1983 with the premise that we could be a positive force for change. We've encouraged millions of people to get their hands in the soil and grow their own food, create beautiful, earth-friendly gardens and — in the process — become backyard environmentalists and land stewards," says Gardener's Supply good works manager Lena Molinari. "KidsGardening has led the youth gardening movement for more than 35 years with the goal of providing every child the opportunity to learn and grow through gardening, and we want to help them fulfill that promise."

The grand prize winners for 2018's grant designed programs to enhance the quality of life for kids and their communities.

They include an afterschool program with a teaching kitchen, an urban farm cultivating community, a Dr. Seuss-themed garden for pre-schoolers, an inclusive, hands-on learning garden for students with mental and physical disabilities, and a



▲ A past Youth Garden Grant award recipient describes the success of their garden, "While the students and involved adults are proud of their 'beautiful garden,' we are especially pleased to see students who struggle in other areas make successful contributions. Students of all ages work together and help each other out. The garden is a classroom that teaches how to succeed in life. Using the garden, we hope to continue 'growing' responsible citizens."

▶ Seed Money sponsors of the Youth Garden Grant get a poster to display in their retail space to lift up their support of learning through the garden.

YOUTH GARDEN GRANT 2019 PROUD SUPPORTER

Wood Prairie Farm is committed to getting more kids engaged in learning through the garden. We are proud to support the 2019 Youth Garden Grant.

What is the Youth Garden Grant?

Beginning with 50 awards in 1982, KidsGardening's Youth Garden Grant is the oldest and longest running award of its kind. This award is designed to build capacity for school and youth educational garden projects that enhance the quality of life for students and their communities.

Interested in Applying?

The award is open to any nonprofit, public or private school, or youth program in the United States planning a new garden program or expanding an established one that serves at least 15 youth between the ages of 3 and 18. Applications are accepted through December 17, 2018. Learn more, and apply at KidsGardening.org.

Kids GARDENING
ORGANIZING THE YOUTH GARDEN MOVEMENT

The Hope Grows garden at a youth detention center is beautiful. Kids at the center have expressed that they enjoy the hard work of the garden, and watching it grow into something they can take pride in. All youth in the care of the center have the ability to visit the garden every couple of days and attend sessions with Master Gardeners every other Sunday.



The REDCO Food Sovereignty Initiative helps teens from several reservations in South Dakota learn about healthy eating, and better understand how small-scale agriculture could serve to empower their home communities.



“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.” This quote from “The Lorax” by Dr. Seuss inspired a preschool to use their garden to teach students about the importance of respecting their environment.

garden that uses traditional Lakota planting techniques.

Helen Rortvedt, executive director of KidsGardening, says, “We know, both anecdotally and through research, that kids who garden experience so many great benefits, such as better eating habits, improved academic performance, and a deeper connection to nature. Youth Garden Grant awardees are able to expand or start programs uniquely suited to the needs of their community. The kids benefit tremendously, and those improvements in nutritional and environmental attitudes trickle along to their families and the entire community.

“What really makes YGG special is that it is our most open-ended grant. Any program — be it a school, community garden or youth program that serves at least 15 kids — can apply. What we are most interested in is a program that will use gardening to make a difference in kids’ lives,” says Rortvedt.

Retailers on Board

Garden centers such as B.B. Barns, as well as retailers America’s Best Flowers, BlueStone Perennials, Wood Prairie Farm, Stark Bro’s and others have offered their support of the Youth Garden Grant as “Seed Money Sponsors.”

Ed Knapton, owner of America’s Best Flowers says, “We take great pride in growing the plants we sell and believe that gardening is a powerful learning tool for all ages. We are blessed with the opportunity to nurture a child’s outlook on the world and love to see a kid’s face light up with pure joy. We support the Youth Garden Grant because with the right tools and experiences, children can gain both the physical skills of planting and harvesting their own food, and the emotional skills of patience and self-satisfaction of a job well-done.”

“Teaching children how to get their hands dirty to grow food is a tremendous gift — especially in the times we live in — and such a positive thing for their development,” says Ken Lane, Stark Bro’s chief marketing officer. “Like music and art, they learn how to create — but they also gain math, vocabulary and organizing skills, along with a sense of responsibility for living things ... and not just those in the garden. We’re very interested in fostering young peoples’ interest in agriculture — perhaps one of those students may grow up to make a groundbreaking discovery, or even come to work at Stark Bro’s.”

Jon Merrill of B.B. Barns agrees, “If we don’t take the time to introduce

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kids to how important horticulture and agriculture are, we run the risk of losing an entire generation, on both a personal and business level."

Says Jim Gerritsen of Wood Prairie Farm, "My wife Megan and I have been organic farmers for over 40 years. In a pattern long familiar, we're now handing the farm down to our son, Caleb. Such generational transfers of practical gardening knowledge have been going on since the dawn of agriculture 10,000 years ago. From the moment we first heard of KidsGardening, we knew we wanted to become involved. Benefiting our planet's future by helping kids and nurturing in them a love of gardening is in total alignment with the lifelong goals and work of our family farm."

"We know the gardening industry is one with a big heart. Gardening has transformative effects for people of all ages, but especially for kids.

We've been surveying our grant winners since 2005, and over 90 percent saw an improvement in environmental attitudes. That's huge. "When companies are able to provide financial support toward getting more kids in the garden, it truly changes kids' lives," says Rortvedt.

Seed Money sponsorship of the Youth Garden Grant is available to garden centers and direct retailers. As Gerritsen and Lane state, the support of the Youth Garden Grant often comes from a true love of gardening and wanting to pass along the many life-changing benefits of gardening to the next generation.

Seed Money sponsorship comes with several marketing benefits. KidsGardening creates a poster for each sponsor for display in their retail store or office heralding their support of getting more kids in the garden. They will also provide a "Youth Garden Grant Proud Supporter" badge for sponsors to display on their website. They also lift up sponsor support to the KidsGardening nationwide social media audience of parents, educators and gardeners. Sponsor logos will be included prominently on the grant landing page, which is the most visited page of the KidsGardening site during the grant period.

If supporting the Youth Garden Grant is in line with your company's mission, you can contact Kristen Wirkkala, the director of development at KidsGardening, to learn more about the benefits and rewards of sponsorship. Levels of sponsorship start at \$500 and can reach up to \$10,000.

Along with garden grants, KidsGardening provides free, garden-based educational resources to parents and educators, including lesson plans

and activities for all ages, growing guides geared toward gardening with kids, and practical know-how and support for starting a youth garden.

Garden-tested curriculum books on topics ranging from math, to literature,

to food systems, are available for sale through Gardener's Supply.

Visit KidsGardening.org to learn more, for resources for gardening with the kids in your life, or to help get more kids learning through the garden. 🌱

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