



Growing a Garden! Caretaking God's Good Creation

In this milestone children will be invited to learn about, and participate in, gardening.

Many children *love* to garden! And gardening with a beloved adult is a wonderful experience for a child that helps them to associate creation with food and with love.

Supplies:

a small area to plant (this can be an outdoor garden space or a small planter that you can keep indoors), potting soil, a packet of seeds (Learn what grows well in your area; choose flowers or a fruit, vegetable, or an herb your child will be likely to want to eat.)

Though there are no books necessary for this milestone, you may want "The Tiny Seed: a Parable", by Katie Warner.

Set up the space:

Have all of your gardening supplies nearby. If you are planting seeds in a pot indoors, you may want to cover a table with cardboard or a sheet that can be easily shaken off when you are done. You will also want either a children's Bible or the story book, "The Tiny Seed."

Milestone

Opening prayer:

Dear God, thank you for the gift of gardens! Thank you for the dirt, for the sunshine, and for the rain that makes gardens grow. And thank you for the opportunity to help make good things grow. Amen.

Scripture:

In the Bible, Jesus tells a lot of stories. Some of his stories are called "parables." A parable is a story about everyday things that help us understand God and the kingdom of heaven. One of the stories Jesus tells is called the parable of the mustard seed. If you are going to read the story book, read it here. If not, read the parable from one of these gospels: Matthew 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-32, or Luke 13:18-19. After reading the story from the book or the Bible, wonder aloud about the story.

I wonder what you think about this story. Give your child a few seconds to wonder. If they don't say anything, offer thoughts such as: **I wonder how something so small grows to be so big. I wonder what happens to seeds in the ground.**

I thought we might plant our own seeds. Tell the child about what type of seeds you bought and where you are going to plant them. Then say something like, **Our seeds need good soil, light, and water to grow. When we help take care of plants, we are helping take care of God's beautiful, good creation. And God's creation takes care of us! Isn't that amazing?!**

Take time helping your child plant the seeds, paying attention to the requirements for depth and spacing. Water gently and, if you have a container, place somewhere it will receive sufficient light. **We can check the seeds every day, give them water when they need it, and watch them grow!**

Closing prayer:

Dear God, thank you for soft soil, bright sun, and gentle rain. Thank you for seeds that wake up and grow into flowers and fruits and veggies. Help us to take good care of our plants and enjoy all of the beauty you have made. Amen.

Notes

A note for going a bit deeper:

If your child is really interested in the plant growth cycle, there are excellent—and inexpensive—learning kits that illustrate this well.

A note for children who may not like to get their hands dirty:

You can find a small pair of garden gloves and use a child-sized garden trowel to minimize their contact with dirt.

Notes for choosing a garden theme:

If you have the space for several plants, try a pizza patch. Grow tomatoes, bell peppers, basil, and oregano. When everything is ready have a homemade pizza night!

If you have the space and want to grow sunflowers, make a sunflower house. Simply plant the seeds in a square, rectangle, or circle, leaving a small "door". When the flowers are grown, your child will have a small hiding spot.

If you are doing a later-in-the-season garden, gourds of various types can be great. If you have the space, try a pumpkin patch!