

Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

It's Harvest Time!

Harvest time is the exciting time of the year when garden plants have matured, fruit has ripened, and the food is ready to be gathered. Although it typically occurs in the fall, the exact timing of the season may vary depending on location or crop. For children it is a fun time to see how seeds planted months ago have grown into real plants with fruits and vegetables. They can connect the foods they have seen in the grocery store or on their plate with what is in a garden. Learning where their food comes from is just one of the many benefits of harvest time.

Having a garden and allowing children to participate in harvest time is a great learning opportunity and healthful experience. Consider some of these other benefits:

- access to fresh fruits and vegetables,
- savings from eating the harvest,
- exercise when helping maintain the garden,
- sweeter or better tasting food, and
- self-confidence from growing and caring for the food.

Food from the garden is colorful and fresh, so children who gather the harvest may want to taste or eat it right away. However, make sure they know to wash the produce first. Have a tasting and invite family and friends to see and taste what they have harvested.

If possible, continue to give the children opportunities to grow food, flowers, or plants—not only in the spring and summer but all year as well. It can be a great, ongoing learning experience that the children will look forward to.

Encourage the children to talk and/or draw pictures of the entire process from planting to harvest. Ask them when, how often, and how much they watered the plant, and what the plant looked like at different stages. Have them talk about the process and what they learned, as well as how they feel about having this experience.



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Use their drawings to make a bulletin board of the growth stages, the harvest, and the meal prep or food being eaten. Here are some examples of what to include:

- dirt in the container,
- seeds in the dirt,
- the plant in the window for sunlight,
- planting outside in the ground,
- watering the plants, and
- showing the harvest-ready food that was grown.

It is important for children to know about the food they eat: how it is grown, where it comes from, and that it does not just appear in the store or supermarket. Who knows, there may be a future farmer in the group of children in your care. Regardless, the knowledge they gain will be unforgettable and will last a life time.



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For Fun!

On the board or a chart, write the words **CUPS**, **GROW**, **HERB**, and **PLANT**. Then, help the children search for the letters and/or words in the puzzle. When they find the words, let them color the squares with different color crayons.

Y	T	U	P	W	L	W	J	L	C
Y	J	Z	M	J	O	R	H	T	J
G	M	K	J	A	E	I	Q	D	I
H	E	R	B	L	M	A	I	T	S
A	E	Q	A	K	J	H	B	D	S
X	P	S	T	K	X	W	S	K	N
S	T	V	O	K	A	W	U	Y	D
D	M	J	C	U	P	S	O	R	K
G	P	B	T	Z	V	Q	H	I	S
G	R	O	W	S	P	L	A	N	T

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