



THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

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Kid-to-Kid Vegetable Gardening Tips

9-Year-Old Vegetable Gardener Everett Sanderson Offers 9 Tips To Get Growing

Through its summer-long [Edible Garden](#) exhibition, The New York Botanical Garden shows kids that growing good-for-you food can be healthy and fun. By digging in the Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden, kids are connecting food, fun, healthy living, and teamwork. Kids are growing delicious fruits and veggies: sugar snap peas, strawberries, blueberries, red sails lettuce, sun gold tomatoes, and lemon balm mint are bountiful in the Family Garden, thriving under the watchful eyes of some of the Botanical Garden's youngest gardeners.



Everett Sanderson

Everett Sanderson is a talented soon-to-be fifth grader, who has spent most of his nine summers helping his mother garden in the Family Garden. Unlike most 9-year-olds, however, Everett is an accomplished gardener and a lover of veggies. It was the harvesting that got him interested in gardening at first: "I realized that in order to harvest, you have to grow it, and in order to grow it, you have to plant it," said Everett. He also said gardening helped him grow to love eating vegetables: "If you can plant it, you have a better chance of liking it."

Now a veteran of the Botanical Garden's [Children's Gardening program](#), Everett started gardening at age 3 as a "Garden Sprout" and is currently into his "mature" gardening years as a "Garden Crafter," leading gardening lessons and hands-on activities. He and his fellow Crafters, Janine and Julia Gayanelo (ages 9 and 10) and Hannah Weingartner (age 10), share helpful tips for kids to get growing this summer!

Everett's 9 Tips:

- 1) **Get used to critters:** Some critters are good for your garden. Worms help the soil and composting and butterflies help pollinate the plants. Some bugs help by eating the bad bugs: spiders eat flies and ladybugs eat aphids. Everett warns that some pesky critters eat your plants like snails, slugs, aphids, and caterpillars.
- 2) **Use natural fertilizers:** "We don't use chemicals," Everett explained, "so you can use organic—that means natural—stuff to help plants grow." His recommended organic fertilizer is cornmeal (ground up corn). But he also says you can try some "really weird" fertilizers such as pigeon dung and dried animal blood.
- 3) **Get rid of contaminated leaves:** Sometimes you'll see little white or green spots on the under side of the leaf. The green spots are aphids and white are their eggs. Other times you'll see holes in the leaves. Those are caterpillars. You need to remove the contaminated leaf so the whole plant doesn't rot.
- 4) **Plants get thirsty:** The hot summer sun can be a problem for plants if you don't water well. Everett recommends watering your garden plants 3 times every other day, using 1 watering can in the morning and 2 towards evening. Janine recommends watering plants at the roots, so they can suck up the most water. Julia adds, "Always water your plants and yourself!" as a way to stay hydrated in the heat.
- 5) **Know when to harvest:** Knowing when to harvest means knowing your plants and using your observation skills. Here are tips about harvesting some delicious veggies:
 - Carrots, radishes, and scallions are ready when you can see the top of the veggie popping out of the soil.
 - Garlic and potatoes are ready to dig or pull up when the leaves are dry and turn all yellow.
 - Corn is ready once you see silky tufts coming out of the stalk. "The hair means there's corn there," Everett offered.
 - Tomatoes are ready to harvest when the color is right. Sun gold tomatoes turn from yellow to bright orange when they're ready to pick. Regular tomatoes start out green and turn bright red when they're ready.

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- 6) **Compost to feed the soil:** Composting is the process of breaking down plants, so that you can reuse them to add nutrients into your garden's soil. Have an adult help you create a compost bin. Put all rotten, old veggies and plants into the bin. Then you can add a couple of worms to decompose the veggie matter. "You don't need to have worms," Everett explains, "They just speed up the process." You can stir up the compost every 2 weeks, or rotate it into different compartments if you want to add new plants.
- 7) **Choose plants that fit your skill level:** Beginning gardeners should first plant veggies that require the least amount of time and energy. Some easy veggies are: radishes, beans, lettuce, and peas. Once you've mastered those, you can try some harder plants like scallions and potatoes, which can be tricky to plant because you have to make sure the correct part is right side up.
- 8) **Safety first:** Always wear a hat and sunscreen to protect your skin from harmful UVA rays. Bring water to stay hydrated. Other helpful tips: Bees won't sting you if you just stay still. Janine adds: "If you have a boo-boo, look for a lamb's ear plant, pick a leaf, wet it, and put it on your cut or scrape." Use trowels (little shovels) to help you dig under adult supervision. Gloves are optional as "you're going to get dirty" anyway.
- 9) **Oh, yes! Get planting help from an adult:** All plants need the same things: soil, water, and sunlight. Everett and his friends recommend getting a grown-up to help you plan and plant your garden, like a parent, teacher, or instructor from the Children's Gardening Program. For kids who don't have home gardens, Everett suggests asking their parents to start a community garden, or an edible garden at school.

If you bring your family to the Children's Vegetable Garden in the Family Garden during *The Edible Garden*, you may just see Everett, Janine, Julia, and Hannah. They're happy to share their gardening tips with you and may also put you to work: "We get a bit of free labor out of the guests," Everett admitted.

The Family Garden will host the **Garlic and Onion Festival on Saturday, July 31, and Sunday, August 1, 1:30–5:30 p.m.** Families can unearth an assortment of alliums (garlic, onions, scallions, shallots, leeks, and chives), tie dye a shirt with all natural dyes made from members of the Allium family, and prepare and sample garlic and onion snacks.

Running through October 17, *The Edible Garden* presents locally grown, seasonal food throughout the summer via hands-on gardening for the whole family and inspirational, lush vegetable and herb gardens. With celebrity chef appearances, daily cooking demonstrations, kitchen gardens, children's programming, a weekly Greenmarket, and home gardening demonstrations, visitors are learning how to create their own edible gardens and transform bountiful harvests into healthful, exceptional meals.



Garden Crafters: Janine, Everett, Hannah, and Julia in the Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden

For more information about *The Edible Garden* and signing up for the Children's Gardening program, visit www.nybg.org.

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The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. The Botanical Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays.

ADMISSION PRICES FOR THE EDIBLE GARDEN: Weekends Featuring Celebrity Chefs – Adults \$20, Seniors/Students \$18, Children \$8, Children Under 2 and Members Free; Weekends – Adults \$15, Seniors/Students \$13, Children \$8, Children Under 2 and Members Free; Weekdays – Adults \$10, Seniors/Students \$9, Children \$4, Children Under 2 and Members Free. Proceeds benefit the Children's Gardening program. Discounts available for groups of 15 or more; contact Group Tours, 718.817.8687. Grounds-only admission is free all day on Wednesdays and from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit www.nybg.org <<http://www.nybg.org>> Read the Botanical Garden's popular blog, *Plant Talk: Inside The New York Botanical Garden* at nybg.org/wordpress

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

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