Great Herbs for Kids

The following is meant to be a general guide of herbs that are recommended for growing with children or placing in a children’s garden. For more detailed information, consult a reliable book on herb gardening, your local extension service, or your local garden center.

**Lemon Balm – *Melissa officinalis***

Lemon Balm is easy to grow and maintain. In fact, take care with this plant because it is a prolific grower and can easily get out of control in the garden. Therefore, it is recommended that this herb be planted in a container. If you intend to put Lemon Balm in the ground be sure to remove the flower heads before they set seed. Children will enjoy the lemony fragrance of this plant as well as the texture of its leaves. Lemon Balm is easy to start from seed, making it an ideal pick for seed starting projects with your children.

**Light:** full sun or partial shade  
**Growth:** perennial  
**Culture:** well-drained, medium rich soil, keep moist  
**Zone:** hardy to zone 5  
**Use:** culinary, crafts  
**Landscape use:** borders, containers  
**Sensory benefits:** smell, touch, taste

**Sage – *Salvia* sp.**

Children will take great delight in watching the butterflies, birds, and bees that are attracted to these plants. *Salvias* also have fragrant leaves and striking flowers.

**Light:** full sun  
**Growth:** perennial  
**Soil:** well-drained  
**Zone:** hardy to zone 5  
**Use:** culinary, crafts  
**Landscape use:** borders  
**Sensory benefits:** smell, visual, hearing  
**Good picks:** *Salvia elegans* (pineapple sage), *S. officinalis* (garden sage)

**Sunflower – *Helianthus annuus***

Sunflowers are often considered to somewhere between an herb and a food plant. Kids love their large, bright, cheerful flowers. They add a touch of whimsy and fun to any children’s garden and they are also easy to grow.

**Light:** full sun  
**Growth:** annual  
**Culture:** well-drained soil  
**Use:** culinary, landscaping, medicinal  
**Good picks:** *Helianthus annuus* ‘Prado Series,’ *H. annuus* ‘Teddy Bear,’ *H. annuus* ‘Russian giant’
Lavender – *Lavandula* sp.
Lavender is a great pick for kid’s because of it’s fragrant leaves and flowers. The plants are known to attract birds, butterflies, and bees. Many varieties also adapt well for use in containers. In addition, the colorful flowers can be used for crafts and cooking. Lavender is durable and will endure some neglect and abuse which makes it a great choice for young children learning to garden.

**Light:** full sun  
**Culture:** well-drained, alkaline soil  
**Growth:** perennial  
**Zones:** 5-8  
**Use:** culinary, crafts  
**Sensory benefits:** smell, visual  
**Landscape use:** massed borders, containers  
**Good picks:** *Lavandula angustifolia*, *L. angustifolia*, ‘Munstead’, *L. officinalis*

Lamb’s Ear – *Stachys byzantina*
Lamb’s ear is a great herb for touching. Children will be delighted with the soft, downy leaves. This plant is often grown more for it’s foliage than its flowers. However, when they are not cut back the flower spikes are also an enjoyable addition to the garden.

**Light:** full sun  
**Zone:** 4-9  
**Growth:** perennial  
**Culture:** well-drained soil  
**Landscape use:** borders  
**Sensory benefits:** touch

Chives – *Allium schoenoprasum*
Chives are a colorful, easy to grow choice for gardening with kids. The flowers and stems are edible and when dried they are great for use in crafts. In addition, they are colorful and fun for children to smell.

**Light:** full sun  
**Use:** culinary, crafts  
**Growth:** perennial  
**Culture:** well-drained, medium rich soil  
**Landscape use:** borders, massed plantings  
**Sensory benefits:** taste, smell, visual  
**Zone:** 3-9
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Nasturtiums – *Tropaeolum majus*
Colorful flowers and fun shaped leaves make nasturtiums a great pick for growing with your children. Their seeds are also large, making them easy for small fingers to handle when planting. Children might also enjoy trying out the freshly washed, peppery tasting leaves. In addition, they are easy to grow and can attract hummingbirds to your garden.

**Light:** full sun
**Culture:** well-drained, average soil
**Growth:** annuals, some tender perennials
**Uses:** culinary
**Landscape use:** borders, groundcover
**Sensory benefits:** taste, visual
**Good picks:** *Tropaeolum majus* ‘Empress of India,’ *T. majus* ‘Peach Melba,’ *T. majus* ‘Moonlight’

Scented geraniums – *Pelargonium* sp.
Scented geraniums are grown mainly for their foliage because of the wonderful scents they emit when their leaves are rubbed or brushed. They come in peppermint, nutmeg, apple, strawberry, and rose-scented varieties to name a few. They work well in containers and small spaces, and can be grown successfully indoors and out. Children will enjoy the great sensory benefits that these plants provide.

**Light:** full sun
**Zone:** usually hardy to zone 9
**Growth:** perennials, usually hardy to zone 9
**Cultivation:** well drained, neutral to alkaline soil, moist soil, plants can take some drought
**Sensory benefits:** smell
**Use:** container plants, crafts, culinary
**Good picks:** *Pelargonium odoratissimum* (apple geranium), *P. tomentosum* (peppermint geranium), *P. graveolens* (rose-scented geranium)

Lemon verbena – *Aloysia citrodora*
Lemon verbena has a pleasing lemony scent that delights children and adults alike. The scent remains long after the foliage is dried making the dried leaves a wonderful choice for potpourris.

**Light:** full sun to partial shade
**Zone:** perennial in 8-12
**Growth:** Perennial in zones 8-11, when exposed to frost it becomes deciduous
**Culture:** well-drained, medium-rich soil
**Sensory benefits:** taste, smell
**Use:** culinary, medicinal, landscaping
Marigolds – *Calendula sp.*
Marigolds have many kid benefits. They are colorful, easy to grow, and easy to start from seed. The flowers are edible and fun to taste. They are a great choice for beginning and young gardeners because they will tolerate small amounts of abuse and neglect.

**Light:** full sun  
**Growth:** annual  
**Culture:** slightly moist garden loam  
**Use:** culinary, crafts, landscape borders  
**Sensory benefits:** visual, taste

**Good picks:** *Calendula officinalis* ‘Greenheart Orange,’ *C. officinalis* ‘Nana Apricots & Oranges,’ *C. officinalis* ‘Porcupine,’ *C. officinalis* ‘Radio Extra Selected,’ *C. officinalis* ‘Touch of Red’

Mints – *Mentha sp.*
Mints offer many great choices for a children’s garden. Their fragrance delights gardeners of all ages. They are prolific growers and it is recommended that they be planted in containers to keep them in check.

**Light:** full sun to part shade  
**Growth:** perennials, some annuals  
**Culture:** slightly moist garden loam, well-drained  
**Zone:** hardy to zone 5  
**Use:** culinary, crafts (potpourri)  
**Sensory benefits:** taste

**Good picks:** *Mentha x piperita* (peppermint), *M. spicata* (spearmint), *M. suaveolens* (pineapple or apple mint)

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