

Growing Together Afterschool Program: Indoor Gardening for Inner-City Youth

Overview: Growing Together empowers youth to take ownership of their food and the environment, blending practical skills with a deeper appreciation for healthy living.

Program Components:

1. Introduction to Gardening:
 - Children are introduced to the basics of gardening, including how plants grow, the importance of sunlight and water, and the life cycle of plants.
 - Each child receives a starter kit with soil, pots, and a variety of seeds (e.g., herbs, fruits, and vegetables).
 - Emphasis is placed on understanding how different seeds produce different plants, teaching kids to identify which seeds grow into which fruits or vegetables.
2. Indoor Farms:
 - Kids are tasked with setting up their own indoor farms in the classroom, where they will be responsible for caring for their plants on a daily or weekly schedule.
 - They will learn how to water, fertilize, and ensure proper lighting for their plants, simulating an urban farm environment inside.
 - Plant Care Management: Students follow a routine, keeping track of watering schedules, plant growth, and overall health through gardening journals.
3. Growing Fruits and Vegetables:
 - The primary focus will be on growing edible plants such as herbs (basil, mint), vegetables (tomatoes, lettuce), and fruits (strawberries).
 - Kids will learn to harvest their crops, taking home the fruits and vegetables they've grown, with the program encouraging healthy eating habits.
 - Take-Home Program: Each participant is given seeds and instructions to start their own mini garden at home, reinforcing the skills they learn in class.
4. Routine and Responsibility:
 - Gardening teaches children the importance of following a routine. They will develop responsibility by sticking to a plant care schedule, such as:
 - Watering the plants on specific days.
 - Checking soil moisture.
 - Observing and recording plant growth.
 - Pruning or replanting when necessary.
5. Environmentalism and Sustainability:
 - By growing their own plants, children will gain a deeper understanding of where food comes from and how plants contribute to a sustainable environment.

- The program introduces them to concepts like composting, reducing food waste, and sustainable farming practices, inspiring future environmentalism.
 - Special activities will include learning about the role of plants in cleaning the air, how to start composting, and using recycled materials for gardening.
6. Healthy Eating and Cooking:
- Throughout the program, participants will be encouraged to use their home-grown fruits and vegetables in meals. They will learn about the health benefits of eating fresh produce and how their gardening efforts can lead to better nutrition.
 - In collaboration with a local chef, kids will be taught how to prepare simple, healthy dishes using their harvested produce, such as salads, smoothies, or veggie wraps.