



# Johnson Brothers Greenhouses

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## My First Garden

*Based on an article from Familyfun.com*

Giving your child his or her own miniature flower garden provides the right balance of big dreams and little tasks. A small garden of annual flowers is easy to take care of and they will learn many skills as they nurture seedlings and cut bouquets for the kitchen table. Explain to your young gardener that you will be there to help, but like a pet, the garden will be their responsibility. Although you will shoulder some of the work, it is important for kids to exercise stewardship for their green, growing things.

You and your child can section off a corner of a larger garden, build a flower box or dig completely new beds. In any case, a sunny plot of 16 square feet or one even smaller will do just fine. A traditional rectangle is easy to dig and will have clearly marked, straight beds that are easy to weed. A border garden works nicely if it is narrow enough for kids to reach to the back without stepping on flowers in the front. A circular design invites a fun border, pie-slice flowerbeds and a perfect birdbath spot. Designate clear paths through your garden by spreading sweet-smelling cedar chips or lining them with stones. Besides being irresistible to kids, pathways keep eager gardeners from trampling new shoots.

### 1. Planting The Garden

Either rototill or dig the appropriate plot--about 4 feet by 4 feet--and add a good dose of composted manure, humus or topsoil to the surface. We recommend Johnson's Own Planting Mix or Gardener & Bloome's Soil Building Compost. Plant your choice of annual seeds (or seedlings) according to package directions. Remember that plants need sufficient space to grow. Show your children how to dig a hole about the size of the root of each plant and place the plant in the hole, gently packing more soil around it. Once everything is planted, give the plot a good watering and continue watering regularly.

### 2. Tending Your Garden

To help your child develop a sense of responsibility for their garden, give them a poster board and markers, and help her draft a colorful garden-chore chart. Make a grid of weekly tasks to be checked off and have a supply of flower stickers to add to the chart for each task completed. Simple kid chores include watering, weeding, flicking flower-eating bugs into a can, mulching, decorating signs for beds, cutting flowers, removing spent blossoms and, of course, giving garden tours to friends and neighbors. A gift of kid-size garden gloves and tools are a joyful way to make the following round of jobs more inviting.

### 3. Mulching

After your seeds sprout, a layer of mulch (composted manure, leaves, grass clippings or other material) helps prevent weed growth.

### 4. Weeding

Teach your child how to differentiate weeds from flower plants (often a difficult task) and then set them on weeding. The job is much easier if you've planted seedlings. Then you and your child can compare the leaves of the plant with the much-different leaves of the weeds. Dig the weed up and let your children notice the roots growing at the bottom of the plant. Point out that the roots need to be pulled up or the weeds will grow back.

### 5. Watering

During the growing season, water the garden with a hose, sprinkler or can, being sure to moisten the soil thoroughly--to the point where it puddles--so the plants' roots can drink their fill. Try to concentrate on watering the dirt, not the petals and leaves. This chore is best done in the morning or evening.

### 6. Cutting

Regularly cutting flowers and removing spent blossoms is healthy for plants--and in many cases, makes them bloom more profusely. The best time to cut flowers is in the evening, after sugar has been stored in the plant tissue all day. Clip stems with a sharp knife or a good pair of clippers, and always cut on a slant. Cut flowers last longest if kept in cool water in a cool room.

## Choosing What To Grow

Discuss with your family each flower's compatibility with your climate and soil. Then talk about the amount of water, sunshine and fertilizer you will be able to offer your flowers. In a small garden notebook, let your child write down each flower's height, color and width. Annuals are adaptable, so don't be frightened by long lists of requirements on seed packets, but do keep your region's climate in mind. The Willamette Valley is, generally, USDA zone 8. Please ask any of our employees if there are any other special instructions for your choices.

### Variations:

**Circular Garden:** 5 feet in diameter and bisected by 10-inch-wide pathways, leaves a young gardener with four tiny plots, each perfect for two varieties of annuals.

**Cutting Garden:** This corner of the garden is the place to grow flowers that thrive from pruning. With their wild, rich hues, delicate Bachelor's Buttons and hardy Zinnias produce great bouquets.

**Fragrance Garden:** A bed of fragrant blossoms can scent your backyard beautifully--and the tiny blooms of Alyssum and Sweet William are irresistible to kids. Herbs, such as Lavender and Sage, also are good candidates for this corner.

**Everlasting Garden:** Good drying flowers, such as Statice and Strawflowers, can be cut and hung to dry for bouquets that will brighten the house all year long.

**Color Garden:** Fill this wedge of the garden with blooms in different shades of your child's favorite color.

## Annuals by Color

<b>Blue</b>			
Ageratum	Lobelia	Petunia-Supertunia	Petunia-Waves
Aster	Marguerite Daisy	Petunia-Surfinia	
Bachelor Button	Petunia-Cascadia		
<b>Pink</b>			
Alyssum ( <i>fragrant</i> )	Geranium	Petunia-Supertunia	Verbena
Ageratum	Impatiens ( <i>shade</i> )	Petunia-Surfinia	Vinca
Aster	Ivy Geranium ( <i>trailing</i> )	Petunia-Million Bells	Wax Begonia ( <i>sun or shade</i> )
Celosia	Nicotiana	Petunia-Wave	Zinnia
Cosmos	Non-Stop Begonia ( <i>shade</i> )	Stock ( <i>fragrant</i> )	
Dahlia	Petunia-Cascadia	Sweet Pea ( <i>fragrant &amp; climbing</i> )	
<b>Purple/Lilac</b>			
Alyssum ( <i>fragrant</i> )	Impatiens ( <i>shade</i> )	Petunia-Supertunia	Salvia
Aster	Ivy Geranium ( <i>trailing</i> )	Petunia-Surfinia	Sweet Pea
Dahlia	Lobelia ( <i>trailing</i> )	Petunia-Million Bells	( <i>fragrant &amp; climbing</i> )
Heliotrope ( <i>fragrant</i> )	Petunia-Cascadia	Petunia-Wave	Verbena
<b>Red</b>			
Aster	Ivy Geranium ( <i>Trailing</i> )	Petunia-Supertunia	Salvia
Celosia	Lotus Vine ( <i>Trailing</i> )	Petunia-Surfinia	Snapdragon
Dahlia	Nicotiana ( <i>Fragrant</i> )	Petunia-Million Bells	Verbena
Geranium	Non-Stop Begonia ( <i>Shade</i> )	Petunia-Waves	Wax Begonia ( <i>Sun or shade</i> )
Impatiens ( <i>Shade</i> )	Petunia-Cascadia	Portulaca	Zinnia
<b>White</b>			
Alyssum ( <i>Fragrant</i> )	Geranium	Petunia-Supertunia	Verbena
Aster	Heliotrope ( <i>Fragrant &amp; trailing</i> )	Petunia-Surfinia	Vinca
Bachelor Button	Impatiens ( <i>Shade</i> )	Petunia-Million Bells	Wax Begonia ( <i>Sun or shade</i> )
Bacopa	Nicotiana ( <i>Fragrant</i> )	Petunia-Waves	Zinnia
Cosmos	Non-Stop Begonia ( <i>Shade</i> )	Salvia	
Dahlia	Petunia-Cascadia	Sweet Pea ( <i>Fragrant &amp; climbing</i> )	
<b>Yellow</b>			
Black-eyed Susan ( <i>Climb</i> )	Marigold	Petunia-Surfinia	Sunflower
Calendula	Nasturtium	Petunia-Million Bells	Zinnia
Celosia	Non-Stop Begonia ( <i>shade</i> )	Petunia-Waves	
Creeping Jenny ( <i>Trailing</i> )	Petunia-Cascadia	Portulaca	
Gazania	Petunia-Supertunia	Snapdragon	