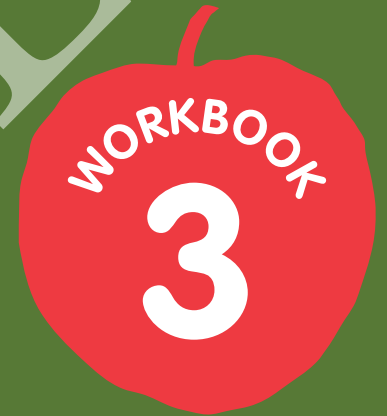


# KITCHEN GARDEN PROGRAM for EARLY CHILDHOOD



Establish  
your garden  
and kitchen  
spaces



# Your garden space

A kitchen garden is where the children at your service enjoy the magic of a productive edible garden. It becomes a rich learning environment when children, staff, families and community members are fully engaged – working together from the initial planning stages to plan and design the site, build the garden beds and construct the infrastructure, all the way through to tending the garden and reaping the rewards of the harvest.



## GETTING HELP

If you're not sure where to start with your garden design, ask for help. Put a call out to families and the local community – there might be a budding gardener in your midst who could assist. You could also approach a local permaculture designer, TAFE or community garden. And for inspiration, arrange a visit to a nearby school or service running a kitchen garden program.

The first step is finding a space for your garden. This doesn't need to be vast – plenty of edible gardens are grown in pots, vertically up walls, on rooftops and in greenhouses. Your circumstances and needs will determine the actual size, look and feel of the garden; your imagination and resourcefulness will determine where and how.



Watch [How does your garden grow?](#) to see how to get started in the garden.

[youtu.be/EmcP15500PM](https://youtu.be/EmcP15500PM)



## Flexible dining spaces

Just as important as actually making a dish is the wonderful ritual of everyone sitting down around a table to share and taste the food they've prepared.

When designing your dining space, focus on creating a home-style atmosphere. This helps to create a link between the home and your service. Strong relationships are fostered through a warm and welcoming environment that helps children feel safe, secure and supported to learn and develop.

Below are some tips for converting an existing space into a home-style dining area.

- Round tables are the preferred shape as they encourage interaction and discussion while eating. However, rectangular or square tables can work just as well.
- Choose table heights and chair sizes that can comfortably and safely accommodate both children and adults.
- When transforming everyday tables and chairs (or the workspaces you're using for food preparation) into a space for sharing food, add tablecloths and placemats to signify the change in function. Tablecloths and placemats also serve a hygienic purpose and contribute to a home-style feel.
- Outside dining is also an option. This might be a permanent outdoor dining space or you could set up folding chairs or tables. Also consider picnics in the shade.
- Cater for diversity – sometimes it's nice to sit around a table, at other times it's fun to sit on floor cushions! The dining space is an extension of the home environment and different children may eat in different ways depending on their ethnicity and culture.



## Harvest table

A harvest table is a wonderful way to connect the garden to the kitchen and share what you have been up to with your community. Your harvest table itself can be an existing table or bench, one made from recycled materials, one donated or something purpose-built. In some services a display board is used in place of the harvest table. All you need is a small area where produce from the garden, photos of the experiences, shared recipes, learning stories and other aspects of the kitchen garden program can be prominently and proudly displayed.



The harvest table is also a great visual reminder of the seasons. You can celebrate the time of the year through a display of recipes, books, plants, drawings and quotes from the children.

Families and community members can also contribute to the harvest table by bringing in seeds, seedlings and produce to share. It is also a place where requests are made; such as for donations and volunteers, or plants.

Position your harvest table near the kitchen space or in a prominent location, such as the foyer, or near the sign-in book, where families are sure to see it. Remember to place your own harvest table at child's height to ensure that everyone can share and contribute to this space.



### INTER-RELATED LEARNING SPACES

Think of the spaces in your kitchen garden program as inter-related – the garden, kitchen, dining and learning spaces work in harmony with each other.

Educators work closely with the kitchen garden team and other staff to plan garden activities, menus and integrated learning around the garden's seasonal growing cycle.

Learning from the garden and kitchen reinforces the curriculum, and the learning is underscored by hands-on, real-life cooking and gardening activities and experiences.





This exercise will help you to reframe risky play as a positive and challenging experience that can be beneficial for children’s learning and development.

1. As a team, examine the type of risky play that already occurs at your service and discuss the reasons why you value these experiences. Document your collective ideas in the table below (an example has been provided for you).
2. List the benefits or rationale for incorporating play with allowable risk.
3. Now discuss the following question with your team: How can you balance your responsibility to protect children from harm while also empowering them to engage in positive risk-taking opportunities?

### Risky play at our service

e.g.

- Including scissors in the art area for children to access freely.

### Benefits of risky play (rationale)

e.g.

- This allows children to exercise their independence and provides opportunities for children to develop confidence and a sense of agency and autonomy. Cultivating a learning environment where children can select their own resources and materials sends the message that adults trust them to make choices about what they want to use, and when.

SAMPLE



#### IDENTIFY RISKS IN YOUR OWN KITCHEN GARDEN

Now that you’ve completed this task, you can record risks in your garden and kitchen spaces. Use the [Risk benefit assessment template for early childhood](#).

[sharedtable.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au/resource-library/720](http://sharedtable.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au/resource-library/720)