Gardening is a great family activity

Summer is in full swing, and many families are dividing their time between Little League baseball games, gymnastics camps, trips to the lake and just relaxing at home. Families looking for a way to spend more quality time together should consider adding plants and gardening to those summer plans.

Whether you’re at the local garden center selecting plants or shrubs, digging holes in which to plant those selections, weeding and pruning or harvesting a bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables, time spent gardening together is a good opportunity to have some great conversations. Ask your kiddos questions and learn new things about each other. Parents can use this time to tell their children about some adventures they had when they were young. It’s also a good time to talk about grandparents or great-grandparents the children may not have had an opportunity to meet.

Cooking the different fresh vegetables that are picked out of the garden is another way to spend time together. Research different recipes and come up with tasty and nutritious ideas to try. Gardening together isn’t just about growing plants, it also is a time to promote healthy eating, develop good exercise habits and it can also be a great stress reliever.

Getting children in the kitchen at an early age will help them develop skills they’ll use throughout their lives. They’ll learn to follow directions by reading recipes and following the steps to create the dish. They’ll also learn about math when measuring ingredients.

Families don’t have to have a big, expansive landscape in which to garden. The important outcome besides pretty flowers and tasty vegetables is the time spent together as a family unit. If space is limited, grow flowers in a pot. Tomatoes also grow well in containers, as do a variety of herbs.

If outdoor space isn’t available, don’t worry, your family can still develop that green thumb. Succulents and cacti are visually interesting and can add to the décor of your home. They’re also a great way for younger kids to start developing gardening skills because of their low maintenance requirements.

Parents can even incorporate some art projects into gardening by allowing their children to paint the pots.

Growing a garden will help children develop a sense of accomplishment in the things they create. They’ll take great pride in giving away excess vegetables or a cut flower arrangement to the neighbors or friends.

Gardening could become a new family tradition. A family that gardens together grows together.