

## Kids Dig Dirt! Grow Your Own Pizza

Written by Sharon McCormick; Photo: PhotoXpress.com



If you're looking for a fun and healthy project to get the kids involved in this Spring, how about growing your own pizza? Yes, you read correctly... growing your own pizza is an easy gardening project that your family can do together while encouraging healthy eating habits.

Did you know that 70 per cent of children aged 13 to 20 spend less than an hour outdoors a day (2013 Active Healthy Kids Report Card)? Gardening is a fun and easy way to get active outdoors while focusing on the health benefits of growing your own food. Kids will also love making a pizza with fresh ingredients from their pizza garden!

### What you will need:

- Garden stakes (these are inexpensive to buy at a garden centre or just use sticks from broken-off tree branches)
- String
- Three different types of pizza vegetable seeds (such as onions, pepper, spinach, broccoli)
- Three different types of pizza herb seeds (such as oregano, basil and parsley)
- Tomato plant

### Activity

Choose an area in your garden to use as the pizza garden and mark this area off with string. You can do this by placing some stakes in a circle in the soil and walking around them with string so that it creates a border. Divide the circle into seven wedges - see, even the garden is shaped like a pizza!

If you don't have enough space for a circle, just plant the seeds throughout any of your garden beds ensuring they get the desired amount of sun indicated on the seed package. Plant each type of seed in the individual sections so you have three different types of vegetables and three different types of herbs. The final wedge can be planted with a tomato plant. Water and weed as needed and watch as the pizza

garden grows!

If you're new to gardening and don't know where to start - or just don't have space for a garden - many neighborhoods have community gardens where people can work together to grow delicious, fresh food. Poppy Innovations also offers community garden plots for rent as well as services to manage your garden if you don't have time to get it started or weed and water it yourself.

Planter and container gardening is also a great way to experiment with gardening, especially if you live in an apartment or condo. There are lots of workshops available on how to grow garden planters.

Remember, you don't need a green thumb or lots of space to be a gardener. It's as easy as taking your kids to the garden centre and letting them pick out seeds for their favorite fruits and veggies (pick ones suitable for Calgary's climate for the best results).

Read the planting directions and get started! Kids will have fun getting their hands dirty, watering and watching their plants grow. And you'll all enjoy the many benefits of gardening like stress relief, exercise and healthy eating. When your kids pick out their own seeds and are responsible for planting and watering them, the more excited they'll be to harvest the crop and savor the fresh food.

So go out and play in the dirt and watch your pizza grow!

*Sharon is the founder of Poppy Innovations, a new social venture that provides a range of interactive education and fun programs across the food spectrum, from gate to plate. Empowering individuals and families to be actively involved in producing their own healthy food through gardening and cooking will pave the way for making healthy food choices.*