



Johnson's Garden Talk

Lawn and garden information for the friends and customers of Johnson's Garden Centers

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February 2001



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Gardening with Kids

Jan Decker, Junior Gardeners' Club Coordinator

I'm fortunate to have most of my kids and grandchildren living close to home. But many families are scattered across the country making it difficult for the kids to develop a bond with grandparents; or cousins to get know each other. Here are some things your families can do together even though you're miles apart. And best of all these projects don't require a lot of time or space.

Begin by making plans with your long-distance relatives then start your project on the same day and compare notes throughout the season by mail, email or phone.

- Bird watching is fun year round. February is National Bird Feeding Month so now is a great time to get started. It is also about time for the annual Great Backyard Bird Count, February 16-19 (for information go to www.birdsource.org/gbbc/). How many birds can you see in an hour? How many different species? Johnson's carries a good selection of feeders and food to help you get started attracting birds to your yard. If you get ambitious, our staff can help you pick out plant material to attract even more birds.

- Get some friendly competition going and have a race with a pot of vines. Your race course can be twine attached to cup hooks on the side of the house, a trellis or lattice. Mark the "course" by inches at the bottom and after the first foot just mark feet. Your "contestants" can be scarlet runner beans, small gourds, morning glories, moon-flowers, or other flowering vines. See who sprouts first, who takes off, and who wins.

- Each of you could plant something new or adopt a tree in your yard or a park. What's happening with it throughout the season? Take photos. Draw pictures. Write poems. Press a few leaves or flowers.

Ask each other questions. Are the same plants common in your areas? What's different? What conditions would make the plants grow differently? Besides keeping in touch with family, the kids also develop skills in observation and communication ... and gain an appreciation for nature.