

## >> green scene

**M**aria Ciavarella, classes co-ordinator at Melbourne garden centre Bulleen Art & Garden, teaches children about the fun and games to be had gardening.

Through her holiday programs, which teach everything from scarecrow making to clay sculpture, Maria aims to get kids passionate about plants. Here are some of her views:

### What do kids love about gardening?

Ownership of a patch allows them to plan and decide what they can grow, then look after it. Weeding is not gardening (that is maintenance), and will definitely put kids off for life.

### What are some benefits of kids getting into the garden?

Getting dirty. Exposing them to a bit of dirt will help build up immunity in our over-sanitised world.

Obviously, getting them outside and away from electronic entertainment gets them in touch with the real world.



If children are allowed to have their own small patch or pot to look after, that teaches them responsibility, much like ownership of a pet does.

It gets kids in touch with the seasonality of life – more than just “winter means football” and “summer means cricket or the beach”.

### Is it ever too early or late to start children off in the garden?

Even babies can benefit from rolling about on the grass. It's never too early and certainly never too late – our adult classes have many attending who are itching to learn how to garden.

### My space


A homemade sign adds a personal touch to a child's garden patch (left)

### Giggles galore

There are plenty of good times to be had outdoors



>> Props: Blue gloves by Jamie Durie, from Big W; yellow-and-white gloves from Poyntons of Essendon



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