



## Top five plants for kids

### 1. Pumpkins

Pumpkin varieties come in fun sizes and colors. Try varieties of mini-pumpkins, like the “Munchkin,” which is perfect for little hands, or the “Jack-Be-Littles.” These grow wonderfully in tubs or barrels. Giant pumpkins need plenty of room, so if you have the space, try “Connecticut Field” or “Yankee Cow.”

If you want to try a white pumpkin, look for the mini-pumpkin “Boo” or the white “Lumina” pumpkin.

#### Great things to do with pumpkins:

- Paint white pumpkins with acrylic paints.
- Carve your name or a picture in the rind of a growing pumpkin while it’s still on the vine. Watch how the name changes as the pumpkin grows.

### 2. Sunflower power

Sunflowers are most exciting plants to grow with young children. They grow fast and produce giant, dramatic flowers. Try “Russian Mammoth” or “Paul Bunyan” for towering flowers. Try “Teddy Bear” or “Elf” for two- to four-foot tall flowers, which can be grown in containers.

#### Great things to do with sunflowers:

- Grow a “playhouse” by planting tall sunflowers to create walls. Remember to leave a space for a door.
- Measure the stalk of the sunflower weekly. They grow so quickly that children enjoy measuring and observing the changes. Or use your camera to take pictures of sunflowers over time to show the stages of their growth.
- Shake or pick out ripe seeds from dried sunflowers. Then make crafts with them. For example, glue them onto cork coasters along with other seeds to make beautiful collages.
- Save sunflower seeds for birdfeeders.

### 3. Gourds

Gourds grow in amazing shapes that are great for play and art projects. Try planting a package of small ornamental mixed gourds. You will harvest a wild mix of odd shapes! Also wonderful for art projects are bottle, dipper, and bushel gourds.

#### Great things to do with gourds:

- Carve names or designs into gourds, while on the vine, just like pumpkins.
- Make a small hole in a dried gourd to make a birdfeeder or nesting spot.
- Make a musical instrument out of a dried gourd. Cut and string rubber bands across the opening for a unique string instrument. Dried gourds make great musical shakers.

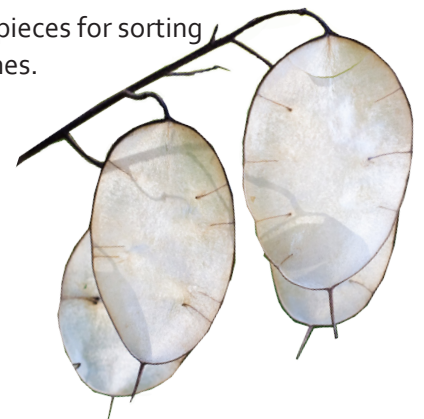
### 4. Silver dollars

(sometimes called Money Plants)

Once the purple flowers have bloomed, a flat green seedpod will develop. Once the seedpod has turned brown, pick it from the stem and carefully slip off the covering to expose the beautiful white disk.

#### Great things to do with silver dollars:

- Use them as pretend coins.
- Paint them different colors.
- They make great pieces for sorting and counting games.

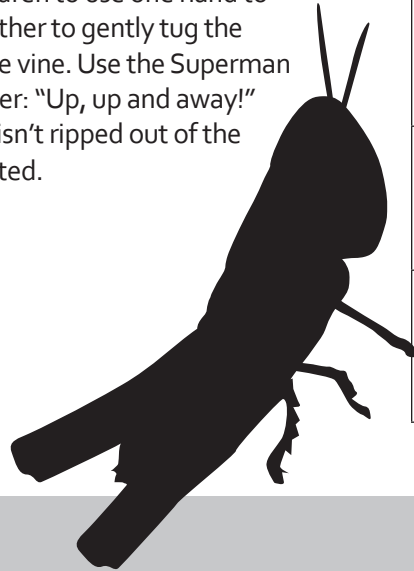


## 5. Snap Peas

Bush Sugar Snap Peas are easy to grow and need only moderate support compared to their tall-growing cousins. The big seeds are easy for little fingers to handle and the peas don't need to be shelled – eat them whole, raw, cooked or right out of the garden.

### Great things to do with snap peas:

- Give the peas a little support to adhere to. A standard tomato cage pushed into a prepared garden bed works well.
- Harvest sweet sugar snap peas right off the vine. When it's time to harvest, teach children to use one hand to steady the pea vine and the other to gently tug the pea pod up and away from the vine. Use the Superman phrase to help them remember: "Up, up and away!" This will help ensure the vine isn't ripped out of the soil when the peas are harvested.



## The sounds of summer

Find a comfortable place for you and your child to lie down outside. Ask your child to close her eyes and listen carefully. How many different sounds does she hear? Ask her to tell you the sounds she hears and write them down. Listen again. Can you hear any new sounds? Try this at different times of day.

Listen for...	These could be...
Long, continuous buzz from the treetops in daytime	crickets
Clear, musical trills or chirps in the day or night	crickets
Quiet buzzes, clicks, snaps, or whispers in day or night	grasshoppers and katydids

### Make a home for crickets

You'll need:

- Crickets
- Large glass or plastic jar
- Sand
- Spray bottle
- Rocks
- Branches
- Toilet paper tubes
- Small bottle cap
- Carrots and apples
- Flaked fish food or kibble

You can try to catch crickets with nets by following their distinctive chirping sound. Or you can buy crickets at a pet or bait store. Place about one inch of sand in the bottom of the jar. Mist at least one corner of the sand with water to make a wet place for crickets to lay eggs. Arrange rocks, branches, and toilet paper tubes to give the crickets places to hide. Give the crickets water daily. By squirting water into a small bottle cap, you can make a little cricket-size water bowl. Feed the crickets slices of carrot and apples and flaked fish food or kibble for protein. Let them go free outside when you have finished learning about them.

You can make a sound like crickets do! Rub the teeth of a comb with your fingers. The cricket makes its sound in a similar way, by rubbing its wings together.

