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Dear (LAST NAME) family,

Perhaps you like to grow tomatoes during the summer, or maybe you just like to do a little weeding in your flower garden. Gardening is one of the most popular hobbies in the United States, and research has revealed the extensive benefits of this activity. Our organization works with Cornell Garden-Based Learning (CGBL), which provides the gardening resources to support engaging and empowering learning experiences. **Garden programs engage young people** and create vibrant foundations for integrated learning and youth development. We sincerely hope that you will explore the programs, activities, and educational materials of CGBL, and make gardening part of your family life.

The benefits of gardens far exceed the typical aesthetic rewards – gardens bring families closer together and create a foundation of cooperation and healthy living. Natural environments – particularly gardens – provide settings where **parents may interact with their children** and teach them the values of hard work, patience, responsibility, and communication. Kids get excited for nature and the outdoors, and families can share significant bonding time.

By providing a home-grown source of fresh fruits and vegetables, family gardens support healthy diets and nutritional responsibility – youth learn about the value of their food. As American kids spend less time outside, and the rate of obesity rises, **gardens provide an excellent way to encourage healthy eating habits and physical recreation**. Research shows that interactions with nature mediate childhood stress and reduce the symptoms of attention deficit disorder (ADD). Plus, interactions with nature enforce positive environmental values and promote the conservation of natural resources.

Gardens provide a solid foundation for the education and growth of young minds, which leads to an increased aptitude for natural sciences as well as **improved academic achievement**. Garden-based learning increases standardized test scores across the academic spectrum,

including language arts, math, history, and social studies. **It reinforces good classroom behavior and life skills.**

We encourage you to build a garden in your backyard, visit your community garden, or even just grow plants near the windowsill – small steps can make a tremendous difference in the lives of your children. Whether you currently garden or not, the free resources from our organization and CGBL will get you started. Your household or community garden can become an important tool to improve and maintain your family well-being while providing rewarding and entertaining recreation.



Cornell Garden-Based Learning

