

Gardening for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Special Educational Needs: Engaging with Nature to Combat Anxiety, Promote Sensory Integration and Build Social Skills

Natasha Etherington

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Winner of the American Horticultural Therapy Association's Book Publication Award 2014

A garden or nature setting presents the perfect opportunity for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and special needs to learn, play and strengthen body and mind. This book empowers teachers and parents with little gardening know-how to get outside and use nature to motivate young learners.

Using a mindfulness approach, Natasha Etherington presents a simple gardening program that offers learning experiences beyond those a special needs student can gain within the classroom. The book outlines the many positive physical, cognitive, sensory, emotional and social benefits of getting out into the garden and provides specially adapted gardening activities for a variety of needs, including those with developmental disabilities and behavioural difficulties, as well as wheelchair users. With a focus on the therapeutic potential of nature, the book shows that gardening can help reduce feelings of anxiety, provide an outlet for physical aggression, build self-esteem through the nurturing of plants and much more.

With this practical program, teachers and parents can easily adopt gardening activities into their schedules and enjoy the benefits of introducing children with special needs to nature and the rhythms of the seasons.



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