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WEST VIRGINIA EARLY CHILDHOOD PROVIDER

QUARTERLY

**Synergistic
Gardening**

**Unlocking
the Secrets
to Quality**

*Quality Settings in
Early Childhood*

Sunbeam's Synergistic Garden

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"Who likes vegetables?" asked our school group teacher. "Yuck!, Not Me!, Gross!, Disgusting!" were the responses from her children. As any good teacher, Miss Sarah couldn't stand for this. She had to change their minds. While attending West Virginia University, she had heard about the Synergistic Garden concept and decided to contact Dan Gifford and Will Oxley of EverybodyEco Synergistic Concert Research Garden in Morgantown, W.Va. Dan and Will talked with center director, Helen Post-Brown, and the decision was made to create a Synergistic Garden at our center.

The Synergistic Gardening style is rooted in work from Masanobu Fukuoka and adapted to the European market garden by Emilia Hazelip, the pioneer of the Synergistic Gardening concept. According to information from EverybodyEco, a Synergistic Garden is guided by four principles including:

- ❖ no cultivation
- ❖ no compaction of the soil
- ❖ no fertilizer (chemical or organic)
- ❖ no chemical treatments (pesticide, herbicide...etc)

Dan and Will met with our children to plan and design the garden. They decided on the design, location, and the plants to plant within the garden.



After the planning process, the children dug the earth and created the mounds for the design.



Next, they watered down cardboard to place over the mounds followed by straw. Then the mulch was laid down along with the steps and the herb garden was created.



Finally came the planting of the fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers. The garden was planted just before July 4th and within a few weeks the plants had rooted and began showing signs of a healthy, strong, productive garden.

During the next few weeks, the school children watered the garden. Watering was all that it took, there wasn't any other upkeep, weeding, or fertilizing.



This garden is a bountifully beautiful Synergistic Garden that is exciting our campus. The children have enjoyed many items from the garden already this summer. They have had squash, zucchini, green peppers, banana peppers, onions, tomatoes, and green beans. They have also made fresh salsa, bruschetta, roasted vegetables and mint water.



"Gardening has always been an important part of Sunbeam's curriculum," said Helen Post-Brown, owner/director of Sunbeam Early Learning Center. "The Synergistic Garden has been our biggest undertaking and our most productive. The garden has allowed our children to develop a sense of pride and enable them to reap the rewards of working hard. It has also brought alive the growing process and given the children the opportunity to truly interact with their environment."