

County: Harlan

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WINDOWSILL GARDEN PROJECT

The 14th Annual 4-H Windowsill Garden Project will begin in March and will be completed in May. This is the largest 4-H Project and reached over 4,000 students in Harlan County, Harlan Independent, Victory Road, Harlan County Christian, Living Waters and Sunshine School who grew tomatoes as part of their 4-H Project Work, School Enrichment or Special Interest Program. In addition to our goal to reach every student in grades K-4 through sixth grade, we will offer the 4-H Windowsill Garden Project on April 22 as part of the Earth Day Celebration at Wal-Mart.

The 4-H Windowsill Garden Project is designed around the five steps in gardening, with a focus on careers and providing food for the family. The five steps are: planting, growing, caring, harvesting and consuming. This project also promotes project entries of vegetables in the Harlan County Fair.

In the 4-H Windowsill Garden Project, students plant tomato seeds in a peat pellet cup and care for the seedlings for five weeks. During this time, students keep growth charts and record procedures for watering, and (if used) fertilizing. At the end of the five week period, students take their seedlings home, transplant them into gardens, buckets, flower pots or flower beds. Evaluation experiences provide students feedback on this project. All students will be awarded 4-H Project Ribbons for their efforts. Blue, red, and white award ribbons will be given to the students to take home with their projects. Many students expressed that their tomatoes did very well last year and that they helped provide vegetables for the summer for their families. Students have been excited to participate this year in the annual project. Some students have grown tomatoes beginning in K-4, and have been eager the past few weeks to let us know that this would make seven years they had gotten to grow seedlings in school.

Most students remember from year to year the important things a plant needs to survive: seed, soil, water, and sunlight. Most all students remember the importance of a greenhouse for plants. Students make a greenhouse of a clear plastic bag to cover their seeds until they sprout. Many students also said they helped their parents or grandparents work in the family garden. Last summer, Todd's girls helped t planted cucumbers, tomatoes, and peppers in a very small flower garden in their back yard. Tonja's children had a large garden last year and raised many vegetables. Since Travis' Dylan lives so close to us, he is eager to begin our vegetable garden, and I know Halle will enjoy helping this year, as well. It is amazing how much work a four year old can do when it is fun. It is important to teach children how to raise vegetables, care for crops and harvest them. Gardening can save lots of money in the summer, and the quality of the vegetables grown is another plus for gardening. It doesn't take a great deal of space for a garden project. Many students raise their tomatoes in a huge flower pots. Some students convert a space in their Mothers' flower gardens for vegetable plants, which produce all summer long.

Teachers are provided goals and objectives for education reform requirements by the 4-H Agent and Assistants. These objectives help fulfill KERA requirements for their lessons plans. Due to the expressed interest of educators and community leaders for this project and its continued success, the 4-H Windowsill Garden Project has become the largest and most popular student 4-H Project in Harlan County.

For more information on the 4-H Windowsill Garden project or other 4-H Projects, contact the Harlan County Extension Office at 573-4464. *Educational programs of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.*