

# **chicago park district**

## **HARVEST GARDEN PROGRAM**

The Harvest Garden program gives children age 8-12, a three season in-depth experience with organic vegetable gardening. The program started in 2000 with a few parks, and has grown to reach 16 parks throughout the city. While our primary goal is to help children appreciate nature by giving them a broader understanding of it, we also aim to incorporate other areas of learning. We read books, do creative writing and visual art activities, and play a lot of games.

The five week spring afternoon session kicks off with garden planning and preparation. The children will really dig in and get their hands dirty as they learn all about seeds, seedlings and planting. Spring culminates with a "tea party," rewarding the children for all their hard work with samples of their harvest.

The eight week summer session runs in succession with Camp Chicago, the Park District's Summer Day Camp program. During summer, Harvest Gardeners learn about vegetable garden maintenance and learn to use their garden herbs and produce for craft projects, including flower arranging and soap making, and for a variety of cooking projects, including making salsa, pickles, and even ice cream!

The summer session culminates with a Harvest Festival, where Harvest Gardeners from all 16 parks gather for some real county fair fun, filled with story telling, square dancing, and all sorts of fun and games. All 16 parks show off their produce and compete for prize ribbons. The day concludes with the ribbons ceremony, with the final announcement of the Best in Show winner.

Finally, the five week fall session reconvenes. During this time, children do a lot of harvesting while learning the importance of sharing when they pick a basket of produce to be donated. Fall also comes with a lot of fun art activities, such as flower pounding and fall flower arranging. As the gardening season comes to an end, gardeners learn about putting the garden "to bed" for the winter.

To sign up for the Harvest Garden program, call one of the parks currently offering it. The list of Harvest Garden parks is available on the community gardening page on the Chicago Park District website.

### **2009 SCHEDULE**

Spring Session (5 weeks): May 4 – June 5

Summer Session (8 weeks): June 22 – Aug. 14

Fall Session (5 weeks): Sept. 14 – Oct. 16