

# Why al fresco play is more than just fun

Evidence is mounting that engaging in free, uninterrupted play, particularly outdoors, is hugely beneficial for youngsters learning about the world around them. Julitta Uliver Romaniuk, centre director at Blossom Village, explains how your child can benefit

In their book, *People Under Three*, Elinor Goldschmied and Sonia Jackson coined the term heuristic play, to outline a structured way of offering children the chance to play freely with a large number of different kinds of objects and receptacles, in a controlled environment but without adult intervention. Particularly useful for children in their second year, who often seem unwilling to engage in any activity for more than a few minutes, heuristic play is something we implement in all our Dubai nurseries.

By adults remaining seated and quiet, the children are able to make their own choices, and parents love watching them discover the world around them. Almost without exception, mums and dads beam with excitement as they tell stories of how pots and pans have been turned into drums or hats, or when baby stacked his first set of blocks.

At Blossom, we encourage heuristic play through our Skygarden Baskets, loaded with natural and recycled objects such as brushes, cork, dried leaves and more, with items regularly updated to keep children interested. If you'd like to create baskets for your children, feel free to ask one of the Blossom team at a nursery near you.

Additionally, we use gardening as a teaching tool in all of our nurseries. It may not be the first thing that springs



Blossom Nurseries have five centres throughout the UAE and are accepting registrations now. For more information, to arrange a visit or to reserve your place, call **055 NURSERY** or visit **[theblossomnursery.com](http://theblossomnursery.com)**

to mind in Dubai, but gardening helps children learn many of the basic life skills they need to prepare them for challenges later in life, from responsibility and self-confidence to communication and observation skills.

By observing how weather affects plants, how seeds sprout and how plants grow, or learning the ways in which gardeners cope with plant problems and butterflies and insects affect the process, our children gain knowledge and a host of new abilities. Those essential ideas encourage hands-on learning, environmental responsibility and self-confidence in

children, and allow them to become more thoughtful and considerate individuals. In addition, by facing the loss of a plant, youngsters learn that it's vital to show them proper care and affection. With the help of these life lessons, even young children can understand the importance of responsibility. At Blossom we try to incorporate gardening into our curriculum as a part of outdoor fun. Although it can be challenging for both children and teachers, it can also benefit communication and offers an amazing opportunity to create memories and share experiences.