

Gardening may fight childhood obesity

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A Kansas professor says gardening may be the way to fight the growing problem of childhood obesity.

Candice Shoemaker, associate professor of horticulture, forestry and recreation resources at Kansas State University, has received a \$1.04 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Research Institute for Project PLANTS, or Promoting Lifelong Activity and Nutrition Through Schools.

Shoemaker and colleagues will work to create gardens -- and high tunnels for gardening during the winter months -- in a school district in Manhattan, Kan. The program will include an after-school program for fourth- and fifth-grade students to grow their own fruits, vegetables and flowers.

She said when children help to grow their own fruits and vegetables, they are more interested in eating them. Also, gardening gets children outdoors and counts as physical activity.

Shoemaker said each school will have a core group of parents, after-school staff, teachers, area master gardeners and community volunteers to help in creating the garden and taking care of it in the summer. "We hope to show how a community can work with a school to put in a garden," Shoemaker said Monday in a news release.

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