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Sowing the seeds of healthy eating: Children who grow their own veg are FIVE times more likely to eat them

- Researchers found that children are five times more likely to eat salad when they have grown it themselves
- On normal days just 2% of students added salad to their main meal
- But when salad was grown by pupils, 10% of pupils chose healthy option

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If you have trouble persuading your children to eat their greens, give them a trowel and send them out into the garden.

Researchers have found that children who learn to grow vegetables are more likely to eat healthily.

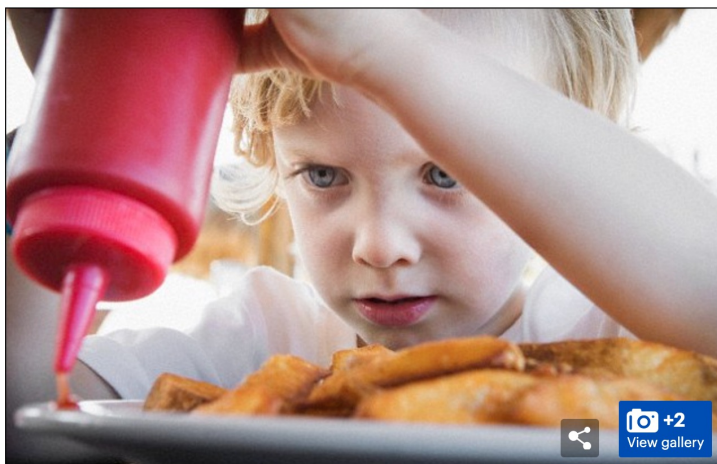
The study, carried out among school pupils in the US, may help solve the perennial problem of trying to get pupils to eat their veg.

Food researchers at Ohio State University and Cornell University in New York found that children are five times more likely to eat salad when they have grown it themselves.

The team, whose work is published in the health journal *Acta Paediatrica*, monitored 370 students eating lunch in their school canteen in upstate New York, on three separate days, to see what they put on their plate and what they left behind.



Prize winner: Children who learn to grow vegetables are more likely to eat healthily, a study has found



Drew Hanks, of Ohio State, said: 'We see great promise with this research. The first hurdle in increasing vegetable consumption is simply getting kids to put them on their plate' (child with junk food pictured)

On normal days just 2 per cent of students added salad to their main meal, the researchers found.

But when the salad ingredients were those grown by pupils in a school project, 10 per cent of pupils chose the healthy option.

Lead author Dr Brian Wansink, director of the Cornell Food and Brand Lab, said: 'This is a small study, but it suggests gardens can help children's diets.'

Co-author Drew Hanks, of Ohio State, added: 'We see great promise with this research. The first hurdle in increasing vegetable consumption is simply getting kids to put them on their plate.'

The findings add to a growing body of research which suggests dietary habits can be fundamentally altered early in life.

In a study last year, Leeds University scientists found that feeding vegetables to children before the age of two makes them more likely to develop a taste for greens.

Babies and toddlers are more ready to accept new vegetables than older children, the researchers found.

And they discovered that it is possible to teach even fussy eaters to like a vegetable by feeding it to them just five to ten times in small quantities.

Professor Marion Hetherington, who led the British research last year, said: 'For parents who wish to encourage healthy eating in their children, our research offers some valuable guidance.'

'If you want to encourage your children to eat vegetables, make sure you start early and often.'