

# Gardening Projects Help Children Flower

American parents may bond with their children by taking them to farmers' markets or showing them how to grow potted plants, but in other areas of the world, growing plants may literally help keep families together.

In Ecuador, for example, children were often left alone while their parents went into the city to work. Because children had to take care of the home while their parents were away, many stopped going to school. ChildFund International, an organization that focuses on working with children, as well as with families, local organizations and communities to create environments in which children can thrive, decided to take a unique, community-wide approach to solving this problem – by growing a garden.

ChildFund Ecuador started training the community in flower and vegetable cultivation, as well as business administration. The local bank, which ChildFund helped develop, gave local fathers the loans that they needed to build greenhouses for roses, carnations and tomatoes. Today, more than 285 families now use their greenhouses as their primary source of income, so the parents don't have to migrate into the cities to work, and children can attend school regularly.

The Actively Engaged Mayan Women, or Mujeres Emprendedoras Mayas, in rural Tecpan, Guatemala, are using macro tunnels – or miniature greenhouses – to grow tomatoes, thereby creating income and improving food security for their families. As the women become more able to create their own income, they also gain the ability to better care for their children.

In ChildFund Uganda, children and their parents planted more than 10,000 eucalyptus trees and 5,000 pine trees to create

two new forests. In an area where environmental degradation has reduced the quality of life, the new forests provide inexpensive firewood, protection against soil erosion and an economic boost, as the trees provide timber for housing and other projects.

“Forests will be a major source of timber, which will be mainly used in house construction, and houses are very important to us,” said 14-year-old Nalubega Florence, a student at St. Andrew Primary School.

To learn how you can help communities come together through the plants that they grow, visit ChildFund International at [www.ChildFund.org](http://www.ChildFund.org).

---

## **Kick Off Your College Financial Aid Game This Fall**

Fall is here, and high school seniors (and their parents) are in the thick of the college application process. But these days, the cost of tuition can seem daunting: 85 percent of parents believe the cost of college is more of a financial burden than in past years, according to a College Ave Student Loans survey of 1,072 parents conducted by Barnes & Noble College Insights. However, many families may not realize and take advantage of the range of financial aid opportunities and options available.

“Don’t let the ‘sticker price’ of a college sway you from applying,” says Joe DePaulo, Co-Founder and CEO of College Ave Student Loans. “The college ‘sticker price’ typically refers to the published annual cost of attendance for any given school, which includes tuition, fees, and an average estimate of other

related costs like room and board. The actual price families will pay depends on how much financial aid they receive which will be unique for each family,” he says.

Start by filling out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Some families skip this form because they think it is too much work for too little payoff. **Don't Fear the FAFSA** By forgoing filling out this important government form, you could be leaving financial aid on the table. Some financial aid programs work on a first-come first-served basis, so getting it done as close to the October 1 start date maximizes the aid you might receive. There are other reasons to make sure the FAFSA is part of your fall financial aid game, according to College Ave Student Loans, a company offering simple and personalized private student loans:

– **More financial aid:** Some schools won't even consider you for merit aid unless you complete this important form.

– **More options:** Students planning to apply for Federal Stafford Loans or Federal PLUS Loans must fill out the FAFSA first.

**Keep Applying to Scholarships** Beyond the FAFSA, students and parents can round out their financial aid plan with scholarships. Many scholarships are available with rolling applications year-round and every little bit helps. College Ave Student Loans offers a monthly chance for students to win a \$1,000 scholarship on their website.

**Build a Balanced College List** College Ave recommends that you apply to a variety of schools. This will give you more opportunities to find a school that fits your budget financially, and one that may offer better financial aid. If scholarships, grants and federal loans in the student's name don't cover the full cost of tuition, College Ave Student Loans offers a simple, stress-free student loan process to help cover college costs. Students and parents can apply

online and get a response in 3 minutes, with no application or origination fees. For more information about college financial aid planning, hints for filling out the FAFSA, and other loan opportunities, visit [collegeavestudentloans.com](http://collegeavestudentloans.com).

---

## **What If You Were Elected President? Children Across the Globe Respond**

On the heels of the presidential election in the U.S., more than 6,200 children from 47 countries are weighing in with their own set of presidential priorities.

The third annual Small Voices, Big Dreams global survey, commissioned by [ChildFund](#) International – a member of ChildFund Alliance – and compiled by GfK Roper, asked children around the world, “If you were president or leader of your country, what would you do to improve the lives of children in your country?”

Overwhelmingly, children answered that improving education would be a top priority under their leadership. One in two (50 percent) respondents in developing countries said they would improve education or provide greater enrichment opportunities.

Ibrahima, a 12-year-old from Guinea, where an overwhelming 77 percent of children would improve education, said, “If I was the president, I would encourage education for every child and would multiply school infrastructures in every village where there are maximum numbers of children of school age.”

The Small Voices, Big Dreams survey allows children like

Ibrahima to share their hopes and dreams and for ChildFund to improve its programs by listening to children to better address their needs, fears and hopes for the future.

While most children believe that getting an education is the key to a brighter future, providing basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter was a concern for children from both developing and developed nations. Approximately 23 percent of all children surveyed acknowledged that affording these basic items would improve the lives of children in their countries.

Creating jobs is also a top concern for children living in developed countries. While unemployment rates are declining in the U.S., children still recognize that country leadership should create employment opportunities and address inequality. Of all developed countries, 17 percent answered that addressing poverty and creating jobs are important compared to 13 percent of children in developing countries.

Health care remains a hot topic in the U.S., but only five percent of children living in developed countries felt that health care needed improvement if they were president. Surprisingly, only nine percent of children living in developing countries felt that health care needed improvement in their respective countries.

Despite the differences in priorities, children are hopeful about their futures and the change they can bring to the world, and that's good news.