



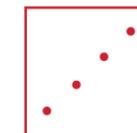
Pets and Plants

Learning to care begins with tending to plants and animals. You wouldn't do business with someone who kicks a dog or lets a plant dry up. People who love plants and animals are generally detail-oriented people who care about the world around them. When hiring people, ask them who they care for—or what. It will tell you a great deal about their level of empathy. Sociopaths have no way to feel empathy. Not good to work with people who don't care.

Whether rich or poor, animals and plants enhance our personalities and lives. Most conversations, after hobbies and sports, are about pets. People who care for children, pets, and plants generally make good companions and business associates. Any self-help book covers the value of petting an animal. Studies show we live longer if we care for a pet. The positive benefits from gardening and feeding birds can be read about in medical journals and psychology books. Sure, there's the expense of vet bills and garden centers (especially if you have an addictive personality). There's the loss and mourning when a pet dies, along with the dreaded winter months with only evergreens and inside plants. Maintenance can be a drag, too. On the flip side, the rewards are abundant: joy, happiness, humor, comfort, safety, good health, camaraderie, peace, warmth, and so on. There should always be enough money for a few zinnia seeds and/or a pet fish.

Teaching children to care about pets and plants develops a life habit of caring. When the boys were growing up, I tried to always have some type of kitchen garden. We would also take road trips into the country and stop at bountiful local vegetable stands. Fall trips were the best, with the bright, show-stopping leaves of the Northeast, hot apple cider, dried corn stalks, and root vegetables. Those trips were inexpensive luxuries. The children could get closer to nature, pick out their own jams, maple syrup, and pumpkins. Then, we would come home and make the roasted vegetable dish along with a roast pork or as a Thanksgiving side.

Taking children to an animal shelter to adopt a kitten or out to a country market to buy locally-grown produce and handmade products adds another dimension of caring to the lesson. Teaching children to care builds a habit and helps shape a character. When I hire people I always ask two things: "What organizations do you help?" and "Do you have any pets?"



Maple-Glazed Roasted Vegetables

Ingredients

1½ pounds brussel sprouts, trimmed and cut in half
1 large red onion (Bermuda), cut into 1" pieces (about 2½ cups)
1 large (almost 2 pounds) acorn or butternut squash, peeled, seeded, cut into ½ inch pieces (*tough job*)
1 pound parsnips, peeled and cut into 1" pieces (about 2½ cups)
2 tablespoons dried thyme
½ cup olive oil
Optional: 2 slices bacon, cooked until crispy and broken on top of roasted vegetables

Supplies

½ cup maple syrup
½ cup light brown sugar
¼ cup salted butter + 1 teaspoon salted butter
½ cup pecan halves and pieces
Parsley, chopped

Preheat oven to 450°.

Toss brussel sprouts, red onion, acorn squash, parsnips and herbs in olive oil. Arrange on a cookie sheet with edges on all four sides. Roast about 35 minutes until fork tender. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Prepare glaze as vegetables roast.

Glaze: Melt butter in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir in maple syrup, brown sugar and pecans. Remove vegetables from oven and drizzle with glaze. Return to oven. Roast 5-8 minutes. Garnish with parsley.

Stir nuts with one teaspoon of butter over medium-high heat until brown and toasted (a couple of minutes).

Serves 8