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## How does your garden grow?

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From an ancestral standpoint, gardening is in mankind's blood. It is a mile marker of civilization, an attempt by people to manipulate their environment. Often it works beautifully, yielding past the gardener's expectations. Other times it flops in spite of every effort. Lesson: there is just so much that can be controlled in the natural processes. The basics of gardening exemplify a healthy outlook on life. Doing our best will likely reap rewards for our efforts; but there may be setbacks. In the end, there is another chance (growing season), at which time we try again, using what we learned the year before.

What a magnificent philosophy to impart to children! Gardening can create this model, even without its being directly taught. Children are smart enough to remember and realize the analogies, although references to various activities can assist the learning process at appropriate moments.

Two recurring themes pervade a majority of gardening books reviewed. One is the inclusion of grandparents. There is much to learn from our elders, many of whom kept gardens out of necessity. The other point is the human transformation that occurs in people who have been away from the earth for some time. So illuminating is the participation in the magic of life sprouting from a mere seed that people are deeply moved in places within that are rarely touched in our hurried, mechanized lives of the 20th Century. The sooner children can tap into this feeling, the more time they have to live glowing lives.

Over the course of the school year, readings and activities will invite the children into the world of growing. If the school system keeps the children with the same teacher for two years, the potential is magnified. Personal growth is available in biology, ecology, sharing, caring, responsibility, obser-

vation skills, interpersonal skills, and the ability to grow one's own food, just to name a few. Sometimes children are flooded with feelings of impotence in an adult's world. Gardening can change that. As Paul Fleischman says in **Seedfolks**:

"There's plenty about my life I can't change.  
Can't bring the dead back to life on this earth.  
Can't make the world loving and kind. Can't  
change myself into a millionaire. But a patch of  
ground in this trashy lot - I can change that.  
Can change it big. Better to put my time into  
that than moaning about the other all day."

### A POSSIBLE GARDENING CURRICULUM FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

1. When the children first enter the classroom at the beginning of the school year, the windowsills will contain various jars with pieces of vegetables sitting in them, some propped with toothpicks. Possibilities include sweet potatoes, carrots, avocados, and pineapples. Nothing need be said until questions come up about them. The kids will notice leaves and roots after a few days. At that point they can be invited to bring in other possible plants. Note can be made of when they were started and how fast they are growing. **Recommended books:** *Eat the Fruit, Plant the Seed* by M. Selsam and *Kids' Gardening, A Kids' Guide to Messing Around in the Dirt* by K. and K. Raftery.
2. A good next step could be observing sprouts growing. This can be done with a variety of seeds, such as alfalfa, sunflower, pumpkin, radish, lentil. The whole process may be completed within 5-8 days, depending on the type of seed used. The sprouts should be eaten as a snack or as an addition to lunch. **Recommended books:**

- Kids' Gardening, A Kids' Guide to Messing Around in the Dirt** by K. and K. Raftery.
3. Making dirt is the basis of successful growing. Children can learn to compost in the classroom, using a glass jar layered with dirt, leaves, and organic material or in a garbage can lined with a plastic bag and kept outdoors. Depending on the size of the garden anticipated, negotiations might be made with the school cafeteria to save non-meat scraps for the compost. Recommended books: **Compost!** by L. Glaser, **Earth** by K. Petty, **Kids' Gardening, A Kid's Guide to Messing Around in the Dirt** by K. and K. Raftery.
  4. During the course of the previously mentioned projects, picture books noted in the bibliography below, could be read and enjoyed aloud. The grandparent theme could be explored further by having students ask their elder relatives about gardening in their past or present. Perhaps the seniors in the students' lives would care to participate in gardening activities in the classroom, bring in some of their bounty, or discuss gardening. Perhaps several elders could come on one day and have a "panel discussion" for the students. Recommended books: **Grandpa's Garden Lunch** by J. Casely, **Beekeepers** by L. High, **Grandma's Garden** E. Moore, **Bud** by K. O'Malley, **The Gardener** by S. Stewart.
  5. Seeds can be planted in the classroom either in trays or in milk cartons. Some could be individual, but others could be considered community plants. If there is not room to transplant to the schoolyard, now would be a good time for students to make a request through the proper channels, either by letter or in person, requesting a space to place the garden. Recommended books: **City Green** by D. DiSalvo-Ryan, **Blue Potatoes, Orange Tomatoes** by R. Creasey.
  6. The plot will need to be dug up. Parental help could be solicited if students need assistance. When transplanting happens, a schedule can be worked up to make sure everyone has a chance to participate as much as they would like in the garden. If there are parents or grandparents who can make it to share in the experience, so much the better. However, the children should be able to handle watering, weeding, and thinning with some instruction from the teacher. Recommended books: **Daisy's Garden** by M. Gerstein, **Bear and Bunny Grow Tomatoes** by B. Koscielniak, **Green Truck Garden Giveaway** by J. Martin, **Blue Potatoes, Orange Tomatoes** by R. Creasey, **The Garden of Happiness** by Erika Tamar.
  7. As the garden comes up, some children may be inspired to make a scarecrow or other items of "garden art" to keep away birds and also to add their touch to the garden (rock borders or stepping stones). Recommended books: **The Pumpkin People** by D. and M. Cavagnaro, **Daisy's Garden** by M. Gerstein, **The Green Truck Garden Giveaway** by J. Martin, **Grandma's Garden** by E. Moore.
  8. Paul Fleischman's **Seedfolks** is a perfect read aloud. Read one chapter at a time, the messages find their ways into the soul of the listener. Partway through, children can be asked to think about writing a chapter of their own for the Gibb Street Community Garden.
  9. There are going to be problems in the garden, calling for special problem-solving sessions. This is a good time to read about, study in person, and decide what to do about various insects, birds, rodents, etc. Recommended books: **Daisy's Garden** by M. Gerstein, **Grandma's Garden** by E. Moore, **Bud** by K. O'Malley, **My Father's Hands** by J. Ryder, **Over Under in the Garden** by P. Schories, **Blue Potatoes, Orange Tomatoes** by R. Creasey, **What About Ladybugs?** by C. Godkin, **Where Butterflies Grow** by J. Ryder, **Kids Gardening, A Kids' Guide to Messing Around in the Dirt** by K. and K. Raftery.
  10. Harvest! Now is the time to celebrate all the work, learning, and yield of the garden. A party should feature the harvest foods, prepared by children with adult assistance, if necessary. This is not an ice cream and pizza party (unless the pizza is made from the harvest). The focus should be on the garden. Recommended books: **Grandpa's Garden Lunch** by J. Casely, **The Pumpkin People** by D. and M. Cavagnaro, **Weslandia** by P. Fleischman, **Bear and Bunny Grow Tomatoes** by B. Koscielniak, **The Green Truck Garden Giveaway** by J. Martin, **Home Lovely** by L. Perkins, **The Gardener** by S. Stewart, **Blue Potatoes, Orange Tomatoes** by R. Creasey.
  11. The garden should be put to rest until next school. Seeds can be saved from sunflowers and pumpkins. Seed catalogs can be ordered for next year, especially from the suggestions in **Green Truck Garden Giveaway** by J. Martin and

**Blue Potatoes, Orange Tomatoes** by R. Creasey. Other recommended books: **The Pumpkin People** by D. and M. Cavagnaro, **Sunflower** by M. Ford, **The Gardener** by S. Stewart, **The Garden of Happiness** by Erika Tamar, **Pumpkin, Pumpkin** by J. Titherington.

#### ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

##### Picture books

Casely, Judith. (1990). **Grandpa's Garden Lunch**. Illus. Judith Casely. 28p. Greenwillow Books, (0-688-08816-3).

Sarah learns the fine points of gardening from Grandpa, including planting, shopping at the nursery, daily upkeep, and enjoying the birds serenading their labors. At harvest time, Grandpa invites Sarah to a lunch featuring salad, tomato and basil pasta, and herb tea, all of which were grown in the garden. Colorful, simplistic artwork beautifully depicts the garden.

Cavagnaro, David and Maggie. (1979). **The Pumpkin People**. Photos by David Cavagnaro. 32p. Sierra Club Books/Charles Scribner's Sons, \$8.95, (0-684-16109-5).

This wonderful volume shares the life cycle of the Cavagnaro family's pumpkins. Beginning with the planting of the seeds, through assembling a scarecrow, to the harvest and pumpkin-carving party, fun photos record the growing season. The party is especially wonderful as pumpkins, gourds, and squash are carved, lit at night, and sent on a trip down the river on small boards. Some of the pumpkins return following a storm and are put back into the compost. The commentary shows the importance of celebration, as well as the cycle of life. David Cavagnaro is an excellent photographer.

Coplans, Peta. (1993). **Dottie**. Illus. Peta Coplans. 28p. Houghton Mifflin, \$14.95, (0-395-66778-7).

Dottie steps out of the box her parents are trying to force her into. She wants to plant and grow, an activity her parents think is not appropriate for dogs. Kids will find this amusing as Dottie and her family live in a human-style house, wear clothes, and walk on two legs. Fun depictions of anthropomorphic animals, the art's comic style contains several clever references throughout.

DiSalvo-Ryan, DyAnne. (1994). **City Green**. Illus. DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan. 36p. Morrow Junior Books (0-688-12786-X) (trade), (0-688-12787-7) (lib).

An inner-city girl sees gardening possibilities in a newly vacant lot. With the help of neighbors who all miss the feel of dirt and the thrill of growing plants, the girl transforms their block and a sadly angry neighbor at the same time. Information on turning a vacant city lot into a community garden is listed with helpful organizations at the end of the story. DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan's artwork views the neighborhood from a variety of perspectives, which in itself says a lot about the little girl's view of the vacant lot.

Fleischman, Paul. (1999). **Weslandia**. Illus. Kevin Hawkes. 36p. Candlewick Press, \$15.99, (0-7636-0006-7).

An unusual boy's summer project begins by growing a new variety of plant. From this start, the boy makes new foods, invents a time-telling device on the ground, experiments with parts of the plant to make his own clothing and tools, writing materials, and number system. In short he develops a whole new culture, the culture of Weslandia. Kevin Hawkes' illustrations are liable to give children a let's-try attitude about forming a new culture of their own.

Ford, Miela. (1995). **Sunflower**. Illus. Sally Noll. 28p. Greenwillow, \$15, (0-686-13301-0) (trade), (0-688-13302-9) (lib).

Simplistic text describes seed, planting steps, growth pattern and harvest of a sunflower plant. The final treat is a sunflower that the young planter shares with the birds and butterflies.

Gerstein, Mordecai. (1995). **Daisy's Garden**. Illus. Susan Yard Harris. 32p. Hyperion, \$15.49, (0-786-82-80-2).

Lovely detailed two-page spreads of a developing garden illustrate the month-by-month changes as the garden comes to fruition. Each reading focuses the eyes onto another detail of the pictures. An element of fantasy intertwines, stating natural events in a way that can help children realize the importance of animals in growing a garden, e.g.,

“We’ll spread seed” is vocalized by mice who actually help spread seed through their daily activity.

Greenstein, Elaine. (1996). **Mrs. Rose’s Garden**. Illus. Elaine Greenstein. 28p. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, \$15, (0-689-80215-3).

Mrs. Rose has grown a beefed-up garden with the help of fertilizer. She has never had such luck and so wants to share the thrill of giant vegetables with her neighbors. In the middle of the night, she and Mr. Rose transplant some of their plants in trade for the neighbors’ not-as-healthy offerings. Everyone then wins at the fair. Watercolor in a sketchy cartoon style.

High, Linda Oatman. (1998). **Beekeepers**. Illus. Doug Chayka. 36p. Boyd Mills Press, \$14.95, (1-56397-486-X).

Soft drawings invite the reader into the respectful regard that Grandpa has for his bees. He and his granddaughter discuss the swarming of the bees in the spring, and Grandpa guides her in catching the swarm - a job both scary and exhilarating!

Koscielniak, Bruce. (1993). **Bear and Bunny Grow Tomatoes**. Illus. Bruce Koscielniak. 36p. Umbrella Books, (0-679-83687-X) (trade), (0-679-83687-4) (lib).

With contrasting styles, Bear and Bunny exhibit the right way and the wrong way to successfully grow crops. In spite of Bunny’s lazy failure, Bear is happy to share his harvest. Fun, cartoon-y drawings show Bunny lazing in a recliner in his field of weeds and flying a helicopter in a futile attempt to find tomatoes in his neglected field.

Martin, Jacqueline B. (1997). **The Green Truck Garden Giveaway**. Illus. by Alec Gillman. 36p. Simon & Schuster, \$16.00, (0-689-80498-9).

The Second Street neighborhood undergoes a transformation of enlightenment after the Green Truck comes by with gardens and almanacs to give away. No excuse is acceptable as gloves are donned, washtubs are filled with dirt, and thorny bushes are planted for the grumpiest man on the block. By the end of the summer, the Second Street neighbors are hooked into nurturing their various crops

and proudly share their yields (including raspberry muffins from the grouch with the thorny bushes!). Excerpts of the almanac are scattered throughout, giving growing hints, a bit of history, and even a few recipes. Excellent book!

Moore, Elaine. (1994). **Grandma’s Garden**. Illus. Dan Andreasen. 34p. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, (0-688-08693-4) (trade), (0-688-08694-2) (lib).

In a spring visit to Grandma, the gardening is begun with measuring rows, planting seeds, and building a scarecrow. That night a rainstorm washes away their work. A couple of nights later, a late freeze threatens the young plum trees that have recently blossomed. **Grandma’s Garden** gives the reader a good look at how gardening is not necessarily predictable. Lifelike illustrations provide a serious backdrop to a story that, naturally, concludes with a successful harvest of fresh plums due to Grandma’s quick action in the face of the frost.

O’Malley, Kevin. (2000). **Bud**. Illus. Kevin O’Malley. 36p. Walker and Company, \$15.95, (0-8027-8718-5) (hardcover), (0-8027-7819-3) (reinforced).

Bud’s parents are embarrassed by his creativity and untidiness. When this reaches into his free-form garden, Bud’s parents are terrified that Grandpa will be disappointed in the way they are raising him. However, when a terrific storm further disarrays the garden, Grandpa connects with a rose that reminds him of his deceased wife. This spurs him on to help Bud reconstruct the garden. Mom and Dad also join in, realizing how much fun gardening can be. Personified rhinos give a comical air to Bud and tease the reader on. The bright coloring of the pictures is sure to attract children to this book.

Perkins, Lynne Rae. (1995). **Home Lovely**. Illus. Lynne Rae Perkins. 36p. Greenwillow, (0-688-13687-7) (trade), (0-688-13688-5) (lib).

Tiffany and her mom are moving down a notch economically, into a sad-looking trailer. Over by the garbage can, Tiffany discovers some sprouts growing. She sorts them by type and replants them, expecting trees and flowers to grow. The mailman admires the well cared for tomatoes, melons and

peas, disappointing Tiffany greatly. In the next couple of days, the mailman brings her a flat of flowers to plant, and Tiffany eventually enjoys the fruits of her harvest. **Home Lovely** is an uplifting story that brings about personal change through connecting with the earth. As the story develops, so do the plants, Tiffany's self-confidence in a new home, and her mom's appearance as she adjusts to being the bread-winner of their little family. The artist has definitely developed the story through these depictions of the characters.

Ryder, JoAnne. (1994). **My Father's Hands**. Illus. Mark Graham. 36p. Morrow Junior Books, (0-688-09189-X) (trade), (0-688-09190-3) (lib).

In exquisite drawings, the young narrator reminisces about her father's hands while gardening and how those hands gently brought her various bugs living in the garden. From a worm to a ladybug to a praying mantis, all of these garden friends are presented to the daughter as a young girl, full of wonder. This book has the potential to break the squeamish barrier of the bug world with its drawings of a fascinated girl who adores her dad and his gardening lessons.

Schories, Pat. (1996). **Over Under in the Garden**. Illus. Pat Schories. 32p. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, \$16.00, (0-374-35677-7).

Botanical illustrations in fine detail reveal enormous amounts of information about flora, fauna and insects found in a garden. **Over Under in the Garden** is an alphabet book of the highest caliber, with a correspondingly alphabetic insect in each drawing of a garden plant. A separate melodrama between a garden snake and a ground squirrel also ensues. Some views include the root systems of the plants, while others are overheads or traditional settings. Each time this book is opened, the reader will find more detail.

Stewart, Sarah. (1997). **The Gardener**. Illus. David Small. 36p. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, \$15, (0-374-32517-0).

Set in the Great Depression, **The Gardener** features a young girl sent to the city to live with her uncle, as her family cannot find employment. Lydia Grace good-naturedly makes the move from

her lushly gardened home to the stark city where her uncle lives. Upon her arrival, the city contrasts heavily with its blacks, grays and browns. But Lydia perseveres, gardening in every available spot in her uncle's apartment, on up to the roof of his building, in an attempt to make her uncle smile. He never does, but he warms up to Lydia and her thoughtfulness. The story is carried in the letters Lydia writes to her family back in the country. Lydia certainly brightens the corner where she is. A wonderful book of optimism and transformation!

Tamar, Erika. (1996). **The Garden of Happiness**. Illus. Barbara Lambase. 64p. Harcourt Brace & Company, \$16 (0-15-230582-3).

A multicultural community garden emerges in New York City, much to the delight of Marisol. Although there is no space in the garden for the curious girl, she nevertheless finds a crack in the sidewalk outside the garden fence big enough to plant a seed. Through her diligent care, Marisol grows a spectacular sunflower, which in turn inspires community muralists working across the street from the garden. Marisol learns the turning of the seasons, even as she watches the spiraling effect of planting the earth. Barbara Lambase's oil paintings splash the cheer of sunflowers and show the movement of a city.

Titherington, Jeanne. (1986). **Pumpkin, Pumpkin**. Illus. Jeanne Titherington. 24p. Greenwillow, (0-688-05695-4) (trade), (0-688-05696-2) (lib).

In gentle colored pencil illustrations, a young boy's experience of growing his own pumpkin from seed is documented, ending with saving some of the seeds for the next growing season. In each picture an animal likely found in a garden is featured.

### Juvenile fiction

Fleischman, Paul. (1997). **Seedfolks**. Illus. Judy Pedersen. 69p. Harper Collins Publishers, \$13.95, 0-06-027471-9 (trade), 0-06-027472-7 (lib).

This incredible volume speaks of a myriad of human experiences, tied together with the grow-

ing of a community garden on a vacant lot in Cleveland. Each person begins with his or her own agenda and ends up a part of a new community.

### Nonfiction

Creasy, Rosalind. (1994). **Blue Potatoes, Orange Tomatoes.** Illus. Ruth Heller. 40p. Sierra Club Books for Children, \$15.95, (0-87156-576-5).

Rosaline Creasy presents gardening to children with the additional incentive to grow fruit and vegetables of unusual colors. Directions from ordering special seeds to the planting process to preparing delicious dishes from the harvest are all clear and precise, sounding totally do-able by youngsters. The lively, colorful drawings of what to expect from the garden will cheer the new gardener on. Included in the individual plant pictures are drawings of possible bug pests for that plant and corresponding text on pest removal.

Glaser, Linda. (1996). **Compost! Growing Gardens from Your Garbage.** Illus. Anca Hariton. 32p. Millbrook Press, (1-56294-659-5).

Lovely paintings in illuminated frames give the oft-regarded disgusting job of composting a new lease on life. A family is shown composting for a better yield in their garden, making it look like something anyone could do and would want to do.

Godkin, Celia. (1995). **What About Ladybugs?** Illus. Celia Godkin. 40p. Sierra Club Books for Children, \$14.95, (0-87156-549-8).

A gardener sprays his garden, chasing away the ladybugs in the process. His plot is then overrun with aphids until he realizes his mistake. Good close-up illustrations of various bugs found in the garden are featured. It's not often one sees a ladybug in flight!

Petty, Kate. (1990). **Earth.** Photos Chris Fairclough. 32p. Franklin Watts, (0-531-14098-9).

Dirt will never be the same for the child reading **Earth**. Through a variety of hands-on activities, children learn to appreciate the make-up of dirt, watch earthworms do their job, and discover how complex the earth is.

Rafferty, Kevin and Kim. (1989). **Kids Gardening, A Kids' Guide to Messing Around in the Dirt.** Illus. Jim M'Guinness. 88p. Klutz Press, (0-932592-25-2).

This step-by-step guide makes it easy for any child to produce a plant from a seed. From composting to transplanting to dealing with bugs in the garden, this small volume with its humorous illustrations make the project relatable to the young novice.

Ryder, Joanne. (1989). **Where Butterflies Grow.** Illus. Lynne Cherry. 32p. Lodestar Books, E. P. Dutton, (0-526-67284-2).

Butterflies are a wonderful addition to a garden. Joanne Ryder examines the life cycle of a butterfly in detail, including why they are desirable in a garden. The author's notes at the end of the book give additional information on how to attract butterflies to the garden. Lynne Cherry's realistic paintings detail the life cycle.

Selsam, Millicent E. (1980). **Eat the Fruit, Plant the Seed.** Photos by Jerome Wexler. 48p. William Morrow & Company, (0-688-22236-6) (trade), (0-688-32236-0) (lib).

No matter what the climate, tropical fruits can be grown from the seeds of what we eat, while expanding the garden into the house. Photos show several stages of growth for avocado, mango, papaya, kiwi, and others. Clearly written and demonstrated.