1994

Readermakers: Gardening Books

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Sinking one’s hands into the brown richness of Mother Earth can be a habit-forming experience. However, unlike some habit-forming adventures, gardening is therapeutic for both body and soul and can be indulged in by all, regardless of age, social status, or financial means.

Gardening can teach many valuable lessons. Children can help parents plan gardens. Perusing seed catalogs, gardening magazines, and books can be a start for even a very young child. Magazines can be cut up or pictures torn out and then glued onto a large sheet of construction paper to form a collage. This can be hung up for inspiration, or its life further extended by laminating it and using it for a place mat. Drawing pictures of the proposed garden or graphing possibilities on graphing paper can be an adventure in planning, reading, art, and math. Even reluctant readers, artists, and mathematicians will be drawn into the process. The other reward is the communication between parents and children.

Once the garden has been planned on paper, children can help prepare catalog orders and be taken along to the nursery or store for plant, seed, and materials purchasing. Here again, reading, writing, math, and artistic skills can all be used in making selections and purchases.

Whether seeds are nurtured and sprouted indoors or seedlings are bought directly from a nursery or grocery store, the process of preparing the soil can be enjoyable for all. Gardening gloves and appropriate gardening tools become prized possessions. Because children are naturally curious and desire to help, gardening becomes an exercise in preparation, nurturing, maintenance, patience, and sharing as the gardening cycle can last all through the year and teach scholastic and social skills. What fun to send a child to the garden to pick the salad fixings for a meal, or to share excess produce with friends and neighbors.
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For those who may dismiss gardening as an exercise in futility, or who have no land, a pot in a windowsill or plants in a half-whiskey barrel are excellent ways to have a garden experience.

Books described in the next few pages illustrate ways to enjoy Mother Earth and to bask in hope. Annotations contain name of author, title, illustrator (if different from the author), publisher, date of publication, ISBN (International Standard Book Number, useful for bookstore and library requests), age level appropriate for reading the text (adults can introduce the fiction books to very young children), number of pages, and price.

FICTION (to get started)


A young girl prepares a flower garden as a birthday surprise for her mother. Beautiful, full-page colored illustrations with short, rhyming text. The main characters are Afro-Americans, and the events, including buying plants at the grocery store and taking them home on the bus, take place in the heart of a big city. The flower garden eventually rests on a window ledge, brightening the entire neighborhood.


A grandfather who likes to work in his garden and his granddaughter, who loves to help, plant and nurture a small garden. One day, the grandmother invites the little girl over for lunch. When she wants to know what they'll be eating, Grandma responds, "We're having the garden for lunch." The flowers they've planted decorate the table, and lunch consists of tea with mint sprigs, a garden salad, spaghetti with tomato-basil sauce, and zucchini cake for dessert. Colored illustrations and concise text are very inspiring.


Bold, bright, full-color illustrations take the reader from first idea to soup and the notion of doing it again next year. The inside cover features
a vegetable soup recipe that uses carrots, onions, potatoes, green beans, cabbage, broccoli, tomatoes, green peppers, zucchini, and corn.


Each year, a mother and child plant bulbs in the fall and order seeds from catalogs in the winter. In the spring, as the soil warms and the bulbs sprout, mother and child go to the garden center. They then plant, nurture, and watch the flowers grow. When summer is over, they look forward to the rainbow they can plant next year.


Simple black-and-white pencil illustrations follow a rabbit as he conceives his garden in the spring and puts it to rest for the winter. This is a concept book that celebrates all the seasons of the year and also makes a great coloring book after the story is told. A great gift idea: *Rabbit Seeds,* a packet of seeds, and a box of crayons or coloring pencils. A hardcover copy was published in 1984 (Four Winds Press, division of Scholastic Inc., 730 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003. ISBN 0-590-07797-X. $9.95).


It's winter, and the grownups discuss the garden. More potatoes are planned because Granny is tired of canning. At the end of spring, everyone helps plant. Summer's end brings the harvest, and then the garden is quiet until next year. Beautiful colored illustrations and accompanying text describe a family and the garden that binds them together. A hardcover copy, published in 1984, is available from Bradbury Press, affiliate of Macmillan, Inc. ISBN 0-02-777970-X. Approximately $12.95.


Muted, colored-pencil illustrations join simple text in tracing the growth of a little boy's pumpkin seed to a full-grown pumpkin. While scooping
out the pumpkin pulp to make a Halloween pumpkin, the little boy saves six pumpkin seeds for planting in the spring.


Nora's radishes seem to take forever to grow. But one day, her Mom asks Nora to pick radishes for a salad. She is surprised to find a bunch of them in the tangle of leaves she pulls up. Colorful illustrations chronicle Nora's impatience and frustrations.

**NONFICTION**


Wonderful as a gift! This album could be presented with a can of wildflower seeds, scissors, glue, cardboard, tweezers, paintbrush, cellophane or masking tape, a pen or pencil, and a hardcover notebook. Beautiful illustrations accompany instructions and descriptions of flowers. Included is an index with the Latin name for each wildflower listed, pages for mounting pressed flowers with space to record thoughts and ideas, and a section on gift ideas. The entire album can be neatly tied up with the attached side-ribbon.


A month-by-month nature guide. January is the time to feed winter birds; February is repotting time; and so forth. Every month presents illustrated instructions for collecting flowers, beach treasures, and other gifts from nature and organizing them into bulletin board displays, a matchbox chest of drawers, and a cardboard herbarium.
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Linnea organizes a seed sprout Olympics, demonstrates the art of watering and cutting plants, forces an amaryllis bulb, plants a minigarden, tackles bugs, pots her plants in creative containers, and makes garden-cress cheese.


This older book is still available in libraries and is worth a look. Humorous illustrations accompany imaginative and instructive text that describes how seeds work, how to create a cress garden in a dish, how to plant a garden for lazy gardeners, how to grow bulbs indoors, and how to grow a flying monster plant that consists of a natural sponge saturated with birdseed (mustard, grass, cress, clover, or rye seeds) with two eyeballs crafted from cardboard circles which are attached to the sponge with toothpicks. Illustrations also show potatoes in a bucket, sunflower races, a high-rise bird restaurant, city crack-in-the-sidewalk gardening, and more. Included is an index, glossary, and list of sources.


Although all types of outdoor, handicraft, and nature crafts are presented in this book, gardening is also an integral part of summer, and there are several sections on gardening in this book. In addition to planting tips, black-and-white illustrations show how to make scarecrows and pest-control pinwheels. Composters, fruit drying, plant fabric dyes, and flower pressing are among the many activities explored.


A whimsically illustrated journal for gardeners of any age. Complete with suggestions for taking before and after photos, plotting graphs, rose
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types, how to plant a tree, cutting flowers, pruning trees and shrubs, and monthly gardening tips. Includes a section on recording what you find intriguing about other people’s gardens.


Soft pastel watercolors beautifully illustrate the text on what-to-do-with-flowers, as well as the facts and folklore surrounding them. For example, an herby sandwich, minty salad, and lavender notepaper instructions are included in this book, along with quotes from Shakespeare and a short tale of Europe’s craze for tulips.


This book tells the journey of a seed to a plant. What makes this book informative and fun are the eggshells in which the bean seeds are planted, sprouted, and transferred as seedlings to the garden.


The German edition of this book won the prestigious German Society for Garden Design Book Award in 1989. This is gardening on-the-cheap side with many no-cost and low-cost ideas. Delightful illustrations accompany idea side-bars. Ideas include plastic-bag greenhouses, a terrace garden, complete with a swimming pool for birds, an umbrella to protect the herb garden from the sun, growing potatoes in a bucket, and getting a larger yield by forcing the plant to grow longer roots (to do this, you cover the green shoots with more soil). An index, list of sources, and Markmann’s constant encouragement and handy tips can make gardening a positive experience for anyone.

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The premise of this book is simple: through gardening, we discover that home grown things taste better, we share, we experience miracles every day, and thus, we forget hatred and war. A school garden, as a teacher outlines, helps develop language arts, social studies, science, physical education, health, art, and math skills. The illustrations and photographs, with their accompanying text, are full of constructive suggestions and how-to instructions. Projects conducted by schools and community groups around the country are spotlighted, garden activities with accompanying questions and suggestions for teachers are clearly written and illustrated, and an index and bibliography are included.


This book is not sold without the tree-starter kit, which contains everything needed to grow a tree except the water. The book explores the gifts a tree bestows on man and nature: oxygen; wood for furniture, homes, and boats; paper, nuts, seeds, leaves, colors, and soil. How to compost, take care of trees, and plant them are other items explored in this wonderful gift-book.


From the television series, actual kids do garden. There is full-color photograph documentation, with side-bar tips and everything one needs to know to successfully progress from the idea to the harvest. An index is also included. Inspirational and hands-on approach to gardening involving kids and adults.


Full-color photographs demonstrate how to plant seeds, create a salad garden without soil, pot and force bulbs, make a hanging garden, start a desert garden, plant strawberries, make new plants from old, grow
vegetables in pots, window garden, and put together an herbal mini-knot garden. All projects are appropriate for windowsills, balconies, and patios.

**ADDITIONAL TITLES:**

Cavagnaro, David and Maggie Cavagnaro. *The Pumpkin People.*
Collier, Ethel. *Who Goes There in My Garden?*
Creasy, Rosalind. *Blue Potatoes, Orange Tomatoes.*
Doughty, Sarah and Diana Bentley. *Let’s Visit a Market Garden.*
Florian, Douglas. *Vegetable Garden.*
Hemphill, Elizabeth. *Your First Book of Herb Gardening.*
Herda, D.J. *Vegetables in a Pot.*
Huff, Barbara A. *Greening the City Streets: The Story of Community Gardens.*
King, Elizabeth. *The Pumpkin Patch.*
Murphy, Louise. *My Garden: A Journal for Gardening throughout the Year.*
Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw. *Flowers for Everyone.*
Riedman, Sarah R. *Gardening without Soil.*
Sobol, Harriet L. *A Book of Vegetables.*
Spangenberg, Christa. *The Garden Year.*

This is by no means a conclusive list of gardening books. Checking your library and bookstores will reveal a wonderful array of gardening books and magazines. Much success!