

Growing Readers Review

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How Does Your Garden Grow?

Imagine involving your children in something that would include science, math, outdoor play, and physical activity. And what if that activity also promoted a healthy lifestyle, taught respect for the earth, and was both exciting and fun? There really is an activity that can do all that and more—and it's called gardening. Whether you start with seeds in cups near a sunny window, pots outside your door, or an available plot of land, your whole family can participate in something that is sure to engender a sense of wonder in children of any age.

Gardening books abound for every age group. Little hands can hold the board book, *In the Garden*, and watch a little boy hoe and plant and water. He goes off to play, then glances at the garden to see that seedlings have appeared.

Children seem to have an affinity for dirt, delighting in the discoveries that digging can bring. In *under Ground*, our tree planter reveals wondrous subterranean treasures.

From planning to harvest to putting the garden to rest for the winter, *It's Our Garden* is a photographic journal of a school's garden. Elementary school children participate in every aspect of the garden including the harvest and feast that follow.

For infants, the garden is a sensory wonderland; for toddlers, an opportunity for purposeful digging; preschoolers get a sense of time and patience and responsibility; and older children can understand and participate in the complete life cycle. The garden is a place for families, friends, and communities.

By Susan C. Brenner, EdD



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BOOKS OF EXCELLENCE

INFANT/TODDLER

In the Garden

Written by Elizabeth Spurr; illustrated by Manelle Oliphant



Patience is a virtue and it is one that is not always easily taught to young children. It is hard to wait for things to happen.

This story follows a little boy as he prepares for and plants his garden. Readers learn what tools he needs to ready the soil, how to plant the seeds, and what it takes for the seeds to grow. They learn how to tend a garden and how Mother Nature lends a hand as well. Gardening takes a lot of tools and a lot of time to grow. The little boy gets distracted while he is waiting for something to sprout, but one day he glances over and is thrilled to see the start of a beautiful garden!

All of this is done using simple one-word descriptions that young readers will be sure to repeat every time. This beautiful board book teaches children that some things really are worth the wait.

About the Author and Illustrator

Elizabeth Spurr has been sharpening a purple pencil and her writing skills since she was a young girl. She was a published author by the age of 10 and could often be found in the children's room at the local library. Her love of the written word continued as she became the editor for her high school newspaper and then graduated with a degree in journalism from the University of Southern California. Readers will find many of her other books, including *In the Woods*, just as delightful as *In the Garden*.

Manelle Oliphant enjoys working in many media, from digital painting to watercolors and pencil, and has illustrated magazines, stickers, and theatre posters in addition to children's books.

Edible Schoolyard: A Universal Idea

Written by Alice Waters

Edible Schoolyard is a true story of a rundown middle school in Berkeley, CA whose staff had a vision to start a garden. The garden became a place where children conducted science experiments, learned responsibility and task completion, and where the food grown was turned into delicious lunches eaten by children around a communal table. Through the garden, children also learned skills as diverse as composting, table manners, cooking, spatial design, and much more. Readers will come to appreciate one of the school's principles: "Food is an academic subject." Beautiful photographs help tell the school's uplifting story, sure to be engaging for readers school-age and above.

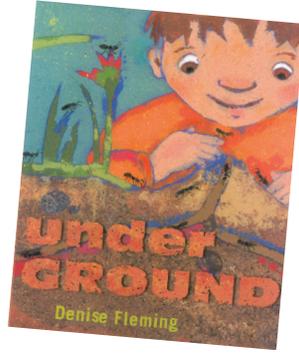


PRESCHOOL

under Ground

Written and illustrated by
Denise Fleming

Have you ever wondered what's underground? Well, dig a little deeper in the book *under Ground*, written and illustrated by Denise Fleming. Children will go on an adventure to see what lies beneath the dirt; from cute bunnies and creepy crawly bugs to treasures buried by children and pets. The book captures children's attention from the first pages with colorful pictures and simple rhyming words. For curious children wanting to learn more about the creatures introduced in the book, the last two pages include "Creature Identification" with more details and simple facts about each. Have fun digging deeper!

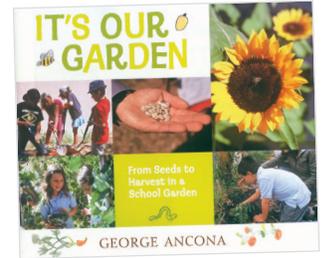


SCHOOL AGE

It's Our Garden: From Seeds to Harvest in a School Garden

Written and illustrated by
George Ancona

The weather in New Mexico is perfect for growing a garden, and the children at the Acequia Madre Elementary School have taken full advantage of it. Throughout the book, there are photographs of children working hard with their teachers, volunteers, friends, and parents to grow and tend to the school's large garden. From the early spring when the seedlings are still growing in the greenhouse, until the beginning of the winter when the harvest is over, the book explains the growing process and the contributions of the entire community. The best part about the garden is the harvest. The school community gathers to taste the benefits of their hard work, patience, and time. They sing songs and cook together to celebrate their festival of good food and fun.



NOTABLE BOOKS

The Little Gardener

Written and illustrated by Jan Gerardi • Infant/Toddler

Lift the flaps to see all of the wonderful things a tiny gardener needs to make a garden grow!

I Like Vegetables

Written and illustrated by Lorena Siminovich • Infant/Toddler

In this book of opposites, the reader can guide baby's fingers across colorful pictures to feel the texture of all the vegetables.

Planting a Rainbow

Written and illustrated by Lois Ehlert • Preschool

A mother and child create an annual garden, beginning with the bulbs planted in the winter and going all the way through the summer blooms.

Jack's Garden

Written and illustrated by Henry Cole • Preschool

A cumulative story that traces a little boy's backyard flower garden from tilling the soil to enjoying the blossoms.

Butterfly Treats and Hummingbirds

Written by Douglas Wood; illustrated by Barry Moser
School Age

Children will learn fun facts about butterflies and hummingbirds as they explore this basic book of colorful and detailed illustrations.

The Secrets of the Garden

Written by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld; illustrated by Priscilla Lamont
School Age

Alice's family has a garden in the backyard that Alice calls her "summer home." She learns about the growing and eating that make up the dozens of food chains that exist right in her own backyard.

The Vegetables We Eat

Written and illustrated by Gail Gibbons • School Age

A fun, factual book all about vegetables with great drawings and everything children need to know, from categorizing vegetables (tuber or root?) to tips for starting their own garden.

