



Growing a Garden Book Collection for Kids

Arden Bucklin-Sporer and Rachel Kathleen Pringle in their book *How to Grow a School Garden* describe school gardens as “libraries full of life, mystery, and surprise.” I tell children that being in a garden is like reading a good book. Reading about gardens not only gets kids jazzed about working in the garden, it allows them to dig more deeply into many of the issues and themes that school gardens bring to play: encouraging community, promoting sustainability and a love of nature, instilling a sense of place to name a few. These are some of the best books for kids that promote gardening.

Top Gardening Books Preschool to Kindergarten

And then it's spring by Julie Fogliano

A boy and his dog are tired of brown and decide to plant a garden.

Compost stew: an a to z recipe for the earth. Mary McKenna Siddals.

A rhyming recipe explains how to make the dark, crumbly, rich, earth-friendly food called compost.

Eating the alphabet: fruits and vegetables A to Z by Lois Ehlert.

Foods from around the world teaches upper and lowercase letters.

From the garden: a counting book about growing food. By Michael Dahl

Introduces the numbers one to twelve as you learn about vegetables.

Growing vegetable soup by Lois Ehlert.

A father and child grow vegetables and then make vegetable soup from them.

Jack's garden by Henry Cole.

Cumulative text describes the stages of that Jack's garden goes through from the time he prepares and plants his seeds.

Pumpkin Pumpkin by Jeanne Titherington

A young boy plants, grows, observes, and then carves a pumpkin. He then saves some of the seeds to plant the next spring.

Rah! rah! radish: a vegetable chant by April Pulley Sayres.

Rhyming text and colorful illustrations describe the taste, scents and appearances of different vegetables.

The tiny seed by Eric Carle.

A simple description of a flowering plant's life cycle through the seasons.

What do roots do? By Kathleen Kudlinski.

A rhyming text describes different kinds of roots.

Top Picture Books on Gardening for Grades 1 to 4

Bring me some apples and I'll make you a pie. Robbin Gourley

Edna and members of her family gather fruits, berries, and vegetables on their Virginia farm and turn them into wonderful meals. Includes five recipes and facts about the life of Edna Lewis, a descendant of slaves who grew up to be a famous chef.

City green. DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan. Marcy and Miss Rosa start a campaign to clean up an empty lot and turn it into a community garden.

Curious garden. Peter Brown. Liam discovers a hidden garden and with careful tending spreads color throughout the gray city.

The gardener by Sarah Stewart.

A girl goes to live with her uncle in the city and takes her love of gardening with her.

Secrets of the garden: food chains and the food web in our backyard.

Kathleen Zoehfeld. Depicts a family of four who make their garden their summer home as they prepare the soil, plant seeds, water the garden, and watch for a harvest of vegetables.

Sylvia's Spinach by Katherine Pryor. Sylvia Spivens hates spinach...so what will she do when the teacher hands her spinach seeds to plant in the school garden? Join Sylvia as she discovers growing food from the ground up.

Tops and bottoms by Janet Stevens.

Hare solves his family's problems by tricking rich and lazy Bear in this funny, energetic version of an old slave story.

The ugly vegetables. Grace Lin. A little girl thinks her mother's garden is the ugliest in the neighborhood until she discovers that flowers might look and smell pretty but Chinese vegetable soup smells best of all. Includes a recipe.

Weslandia by Paul Felischman.

Wesley's garden produces a crop of strange plants that provide him with food, clothing and shelter enabling him to start his own civilization.

Yucky worms. Vivian French.

While helping Grandma in the garden, a child learns about the important role of the earthworm in helping plants grow.

Top Non-Fiction Gardening Books for Grades 1 to 4

Blue potatoes, orange tomatoes. Rosalind Creasy.

Describes how to plant, grow, and cook a variety of unusually colored vegetables, including red corn, yellow watermelons, and multicolored radishes.

Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table by Jacqueline Briggs Martin

A biography of Will Allen, founder of Growing Power, whose mission is to bring access to good, healthy, inexpensive food to everyone.

First Garden: the White House Garden and how it grew by Robin Gourley.

Describes Michelle Obama's kitchen garden and how she has used it to address children's health.

Food for thought: the stories behind the things we eat. Ken Robbins.

Photographs and text explain how commonly consumed foods were introduced to the human palate, and provides brief histories on apples, oranges, corn, bananas, tomatoes, potatoes, pomegranates, grapes, and mushrooms.

Garbage helps our garden grow by Lisa Glaser.

Describes the importance of compost in growing food.

It's our garden: from seeds to harvest in a school garden by George Ancona.

Documents a year in a school garden in Santa Fe.

Our school garden! Rick Swann.

A boy discovers the joy of growing and learning at his new school's edible garden.

Pumpkins by Ken Robbins

Follows the life cycle of a pumpkin. Great photographs.

Reducing your foodprint: farming, cooking, and eating for a healthy planet.

Ellen Rodger. A discussion of energy conservation, reviewing the history of cultivation, and looking at how people can develop a more sustainable lifestyle through their eating habits by going organic, eating locally, using fair trade food, and green cooking.

Seeds. Ken Robbins. Describes how seeds grow and discusses shape, size, and dispersal patterns. Great photographs.

Seed, sprout, pumpkin, pie. Jill Esbaum.

Full-color photographs and text follows the life cycle of a pumpkin seed, from germination to flower to a fully developed melon, which are often carved for Halloween decorations or made into pumpkin pie.

Yum! Mmmm! Que rico! America's sproutings by Pat Mora.

A collection of haikus that celebrates indigenous foods of the Americas, such as blueberries and vanilla, and includes information about each food's origins.

Top gardening books Grades 5 to 8

Eva of the Farm by Dia Calhoun. Twelve-year-old Eva writes beautiful poems on the farm in Washington State that her family has owned for generations, but when money runs out and then her baby brother gets sick, the family faces foreclosure and the way of life she loves is threatened.

Omnivore's dilemma: the secrets behind what you eat. Young readers ed. Ritchie Chevat and Michael Pollen.

Examines the origins of the different food chains that have sustained humans throughout history, discussing how certain foods and cuisines have become a popular part of people's daily diets.

Project Mulberry by Linda Sue Park.

Julia, a Korean-American, and her friend Patrick learn about tolerance, friendship, and patience while working together on a project raising their own silkworms.

Seedfolks. Paul Fleischman. One by one, a number of people of varying ages and backgrounds transform a trash-filled inner-city lot into a productive and beautiful garden, and, in doing so, the gardeners are themselves transformed.

Return to sender by Julia Alvarez. After his family hires migrant Mexican workers to help save their Vermont farm from foreclosure, eleven-year-old Tyler befriends the oldest daughter, but when he discovers they may not be in the country legally, he realizes that real friendship knows no borders.

Feel free to pass this bibliography on as well as any project and curriculum ideas posted on my web site:

rickswann.com

*Rick Swann
rickswann@mac.com*