Growing Good Kids Book List

The Junior Master Gardener Program and the American Horticultural Society honor engaging, inspiring works of plant, garden and ecology-themed children’s literature through the “Growing Good Kids – Excellence in Children’s Literature Awards” Program.

2015

Before We Eat: From Farm to Table
By Pat Brisson Illustrated by Mary Azarian
Ages: 5-10

Milk doesn’t just appear in your refrigerator, or apples on your kitchen counter. Before we eat, many people must work very hard planting grain, catching fish, tending animals, and filling crates. In this book, vibrantly illustrated by Caldecott Medalist Mary Azarian, readers find out what must happen before food can get to our table to nourish our bodies and spirits.

2014

What’s in the Garden?
By: Marianne Berkes | Illustration: Cris Arbo
Ages: 8-12

Good food doesn’t begin on a store shelf with a box. It comes from a garden bursting with life, color, sounds, smells, sunshine, moisture, birds, and bees! Healthy food becomes much more interesting when children know where they come from. So what’s in the garden? Kids will find a variety fruits and vegetables, and a tasty, kid-friendly recipe for each one to start a lifetime of good eating. A “food for thought” section presents interesting facts about each fruit and vegetable, and a “how does your garden grow?” section explains facts about gardening and the parts of plants. Author Marianne Berkes consulted with nutritionists and personally made every recipe in the book, to be sure they are both tasty and kid-friendly.

2013

Our School Garden!
By: Rick Swann | Illustration: Christy Hale
Ages: 8-12

New city. New school. Michael is feeling all alone—until he discovers the school garden! There’s so many ways to learn, and so much work to do. Taste a leaf? Mmm, nice and tangy hot. Dig for bugs? “Roly-poly!” he yells. But the garden is much more than activities outdoors: making school garden stone soup, writing Found Poems and solving garden riddles, getting involved in community projects such as
Growing good Kids book list

Harvest Day, food bank donations, and spring plant sales. Each season creates a new way to learn, explore, discover and make friends.

Molly’s Organic Farm
By: Carol Malnor and Trina Hunner | Illustration by: Trina Hunner
Ages: 8-12

Whoosh...the wind blows open a creaky gate. Inquisitive and mischievous, a homeless little cat scampers through—and suddenly finds herself in the wondrous world of an organic farm! Affectionately named “Molly” by the farmers who discover her, she romps, naps, and hunts among the vegetables. Seen through Molly’s eyes, the reader discovers the interplay of nature that grows wholesome food. But what will happen to Molly when winter comes? Based on a true story, Molly will touch children’s hearts while introducing them to plants and the key elements of growing food organically. Standards-based science concepts and activities at the end of the book expand the message of the story.

First Peas to the Table
By: Susan Grigsby Illustration by: Nicole Tadgell
Ages: 8-12

Maya loves contests, so she is excited when her teacher announces that her class will plant a garden like Thomas Jefferson’s. They’ll also have a First Peas to the Table contest just like Jefferson and his neighbors had. Maya plants her pea seeds with a secret head start, found in Thomas Jefferson’s Garden Book. But her friend Shakayla has plans of her own for winning the contest.

2012

Planting the Wild Garden
By: Kathryn O. Galbraith | Illustration by: Wendy Anderson Halperin
Ages: 8-12

A farmer and her son plant vegetables in their garden, and the wind carries a few seeds away. Birds and animals may carry some along with them on their travels. Sometimes the rain washes them away to a new and unexpected location. And sometimes something more extraordinary occurs, as in when the pods of the Scotch Broom plant open explosively in the summer heat, scattering seed everywhere like popcorn. Year-round, we all play a role in the dispersal of seeds throughout our landscape, planting the wild garden together.
Water, Weed and Wait
By: Edith Hope Fine & Angela Demos Halpin | Illustration by: Colleen Madden
Ages: 8-12

When Miss Marigold challenges the kids at Pepper Lane Elementary to turn an unpromising patch of their schoolyard into a garden full of fruits, flowers, and vegetables, they know they'll need all the help they can get. Soon everyone in the community is lending a hand—including an unlikely neighbor with a soft spot for gardening—and it isn’t long before peppers, zucchini, sugar peas, snapdragons, zinnias, and much more are growing and blooming. Back matter includes photos of students gardening in real school gardens and information on how readers can start their own school or home garden project.

2011

In the Garden with Dr. Carver
By: Susan Grigsby | Illustration by: Nicole Tadgell
Ages: 8-12

Sally is a young girl living in rural Alabama in the early 1900s, a time when people were struggling to grow food in soil that had been depleted by years of cotton production. One day, Dr. George Washington Carver shows up to help the grownups with their farms and the children with their school garden. He teaches them how to restore the soil and respect the balance of nature. He even prepares a delicious lunch made of plants, including “chicken” made from peanuts. And Sally never forgets the lessons this wise man leaves in her heart and mind. Susan Grigsby’s warm story shines new light on an African American scientist who was ahead of his time.

2010

Bring Me Some Apples and I’ll Make You a Pie
By: Robbin Gourley
Ages 8-12

With lyrical text and glorious watercolor illustrations, this very special book traces the childhood roots of Edna Lewis and her appreciation for the bounties of nature. The story follows Edna from early spring through the growing season to a family dinner celebrating a successful harvest. Edna and her family lived by the seasons, growing and harvesting nature’s gifts. When she grew up she moved to New York City where she became a famous chef. An award-winning pioneer in her own right, Edna never forgot the lessons she learned as a child.
Growing Good Kids Book List

**The Curious Garden**
By: Peter Brown
Ages 4-12

One boy’s quest for a greener word...one garden at a time. While out exploring one day, a little boy named Liam discovers a struggling garden and decides to take care of it. As time passes, the garden spreads throughout the dark, gray city, transforming it into a lush, green world. This is an enchanting tale with environmental themes and breathtaking illustrations that become more vibrant as the garden blooms. Red-headed Liam can also be spotted on every page, adding a clever seek-and-find element to this captivating picture book.

2009

**Flip, Float, Fly: Seeds on the Move**
By: JoAnn Early Macken | Illustration by: Pam Paparone
Age 4-10

A gust of wind lifts a maple seed, sending it spinning like a shiny green helicopter through the sky. Where will it land? From splashing away in a raindrop to scurrying with scampering squirrels to hitching rides on your sleeves and socks, seeds have many ingenious ways of traveling to new places, growing roots, and beginning the cycle again.

**Big Yellow Sunflower**
By Frances Barry
Age 3-8

A seed is falling to the ground. What will it be? Turn the shaped pages as a mole, a worm, a snail, a bird, a bee, and other creatures watch the seed take root and sprout up through the soil. As each page fans out revealing a bright splash of yellow, a gigantic sunflower unfolds in a brilliant display. Explore the wonders of things that grow!

2008

**The Runaway Garden**
By: Jeffery L. Schatzter | Illustration by: Jeffery Ebbeler
Ages 4-12

What made the snap beans snap?
How did the berries get into a jam?
What happened to the cauliflower’s head?
Read along as Grandpa spins a tale about the night that all the plants in the garden get up and run away. At first they think running away is fun, but it isn't long before things go terribly wrong.

2007

**A Seed Is Sleepy**
By Dianna Hutts Aston | Illustrated by Sylvia Long
Ages 4-12

“A seed is sleepy. It lies there, tucked inside its flower, on its cone, or beneath the soil. Snug. Still.” Poetic in voice and elegant in design, A Seed Is Sleepy is a gorgeous and informative introduction to seeds that is equally at home being read on a parent’s lap as in a classroom reading circle.

2006

**Leaf Man**
By Lois Ehlert
Ages 4-12

Fall has come, the wind is gusting, and Leaf Man is on the move. Is he drifting east, over the marsh and ducks and geese? Or is he heading west, above the orchards, prairie meadows, and spotted cows? No one’s quite sure, but this much is certain: A Leaf Man’s got to go where the wind blows.

With illustrations made from actual fall leaves and die-cut pages on every spread that reveal gorgeous landscape vistas, here is a playful, whimsical, and evocative book that celebrates the natural world and the rich imaginative life of children.

**Classics:**

**A Place to Grow**
By: Stephanie Bloom | Illustration by: Kelly Murphy
Ages 4-8

A seed is desperate to find a place to grow in this tale with a powerful message.
GROWING GOOD KIDS BOOK LIST

Carrot Seed
By: Ruth Krauss | Illustration by: Crockett Johnson
Ages 4-8
Despite everyone’s dire predictions, a little boy has faith in the carrot seed he plants.

How Groundhog’s Garden Grew
By Lynne Cherry
Ages 4-8
Squirrel teaches Little Groundhog how to plant and tend a vegetable garden.

I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato
By Lauren Child
Ages 4-6
A fussy eater decides to sample the carrots after her brother convinces her that they are really orange twiglets from Jupiter.

Inch by Inch: A Garden Song
By David Mallett
Ages 4-8
Inch by inch, row by row, a child grows a garden with the help of the rain and the earth. Based on a popular folksong.

Lily’s Garden
By Deborah Kogan Ray
Ages 4-8
A young girl in Maine and her grandmother in California exchange letters and packages which reflect cycles of planting and harvesting in their different climates.
**Mrs. Spitzer’s Garden**  
By: Edith Pattou | Illustration by: Mary Beth Owens  
Ages 4-8  

With her sure, loving, gardener’s touch, Mrs. Spitzer nurtures the students in her classroom each year.

**Oliver’s Vegetables**  
By Vivian French  
Ages 4-8  

While visiting his grandfather, who has a wonderful garden, Oliver learns to eat vegetables other than potatoes.

**Plantzilla**  
By: Jerdine Nolen | Illustration by: David Catrow  
Ages 4-8  

In a series of letters a boy, his science teacher, and his parents discuss the progress of a very unusual, sometimes frightening, plant that becomes more human as the summer progresses.

**Pumpkins**  
By Mary Lyn Ray | Illustration by Barry Root  
Ages 4-8  

A man harvests and sells a bountiful crop of pumpkins so that he will be able to preserve the field from developers.

**Scarlette Beane**  
By Karen Wallace | Illustration by Jon Berkley  
Ages 4-8  

When family members give five-year-old Scarlette a garden, she succeeds in growing gigantic vegetables and creating something wonderful.

**Sunflower House**  
By Eve Bunting | Illustrated by Kathryn Hewitt  
Ages 4-8  

A young boy creates a summer playhouse by planting sunflowers and saves the seeds to make another house the next year.
The Gardener
By Sarah Stewart | Illustrated by David Small
Ages 9-12
A series of letters relating what happens when, after her father loses his job, Lydia Grace goes to live with her Uncle Jim in the city but takes her love for gardening with her.

The Giving Tree
By Shel Silverstein
Ages 4-8
A young boy grows to manhood and old age experiencing the love and generosity of a tree which gives to him without thought of return.

The Lorax
By Dr. Seuss
Ages 4-8
The Once-ler describes the results of the local pollution problem.

Tops and Bottoms
By Janet Stevens
Ages 4-8
Hare turns his bad luck around by striking a clever deal with the rich and lazy bear down the road.

Two Old Potatoes and Me
By John Coy | Illustrated by Carolyn Fisher
Ages 4-8
After a young girl finds two old potatoes at her father’s house, they plant and tend them to see if they will have new potatoes in September.

Weslandia
By Paul Fleischman | Illustrated by Kevin Hawkes
Ages 4-8
Wesley’s garden produces a crop of huge, strange plants which provide him with clothing, shelter, food, and drink, thus helping him create his own civilization and changing his life.
**Whose Garden is it?**  
By Mary Ann Hoberman  
Ages 4-8

When Mrs. McGee walks through a garden wondering whose it is, all of the plants and animals as well as the sun and the gardener claim it as their own.

**The Tiny Seed**  
By Eric Carle  
Ages 4-8

A great story for younger children describing a flowering plant’s life cycle through the seasons.

**Other Books we LOVE**

**Rah Rah Radishes**  
by April Pulley Sayre  
Ages 4-8

Know any kids who don’t like veggies? Here is a book that’s sure to change their hungry minds! With a raucous rhyming text, Rah, Rah Radishes celebrates fresh vegetables, nature’s bright colors, and the joy of healthy eating. The book’s interactive spirit encourages kids to join in on the read-aloud fun, and little ones won’t be able to resist the book’s vibrant photographs--they’re a feast for the eyes!

**Growing Vegetable Soup**  
by Lois Ehlert  
Ages: Pre K

"Dad says we are going to grow vegetable soup." So begins Lois Ehlert’s bright, bold picture book about vegetable gardening for the very young. The necessary tools are pictured and labeled, as are the seeds (green bean, pea, corn, zucchini squash, and carrot). Then the real gardening happens . . . planting, weeding, harvesting, washing, chopping, and cooking! In the end? "It was the best soup ever." Ehlert’s simple, colorful cut-paper-style illustrations are child-friendly, as is the big black type. A recipe for vegetable soup tops it all off!

**Eating the Alphabet**  
By Lois Ehlert  
Ages: 4-7
While teaching upper- and lowercase letters to preschoolers, Ehlert introduces fruits and vegetables from around the world. A glossary at the end provides interesting facts about each food.

**A Fruit is a Suitcase for Seeds**  
by Jean Richards  
Ages 5-8

"Many seeds travel inside fruits. The fruit is like a suitcase for the seeds. It protects them on their trip." Readers will learn how fruits are designed to protect a plant’s seeds and also to help the plant spread its seeds to new places.

**How Did That Get in My Lunchbox? The Story of Food**  
by Chris Butterworth  
Ages 5-8

One of the best parts of a young child’s day is opening a lunchbox and diving in. But how did that delicious food get there? From planting wheat to mixing dough, climbing trees to machine-squeezing fruit, picking cocoa pods to stirring a vat of melted bliss, here is a clear, engaging look at the steps involved in producing some common foods. Health tips and a peek at basic food groups complete the menu.

**Plant a Little Seed**  
by Bonnie Christensen  
Ages 4-7

With a little help from a watering can, bright sunlight, and a lot of patience, two friends plant seeds in their community garden and watch how they grow. Slowly, the seeds turn into sprouts, which grow into stems, followed by leaves and buds! The garden will soon be teeming with life and ready for a harvest season celebration. But until then, the children water and wait and dream . . .

**Soup Day**  
by Melissa Iwai  
Ages 2-5

On a cold, snowy day, a young girl and her mother shop to buy ingredients for vegetable soup. At home, they work together—step by step—to prepare the meal. While the soup is cooking, they spend the time playing games and reading. Before long, Daddy’s home and the family sits down to enjoy a homemade dinner. This book celebrates the importance of making a nutritious meal and sharing in the process.
**GROWING GOOD KIDS BOOK LIST**

**Up We Grow! A Year in the Life of a Small Local Farm**  
by Deborah Hodge  
Ages 4-7

Up We Grow! is an informative and inspiring book highlighting the importance of small, local farms. Heartwarming photos invite children into the world of a small, co-operative farm over four seasons. Readers will get to know the hardworking farmers who plow, plant, compost, mulch, harvest and market fruits and vegetables, and care for animals.

**We are What We Eat!**  
by Sally Smallwood  
Ages 3-5

More than an entertaining introduction to healthy eating, children will learn new vocabulary while discovering the five senses, all by tasting exotic fruits and earthy vegetables. Turning the healthiest part of the kitchen into a fantasyland of fun food characters, this vivid board book will have children rethinking the vegetables and fruits left neglected on their plate. Whether cut in half, sliced, or peeled, vegetables are more than just healthy; they can also be fun to eat and prepare—especially if the guest chef has an avocado body and zucchini legs.

**YUMMY! Good Food Makes Me Strong!**  
by Shelley Rotner and Sheila Kelly  
Ages 3-6

Getting young children involved in making healthy choices sets them on the right track for life. This book helps inspire kids and families to have fun growing, preparing, and eating fresh and wholesome meals and snacks.