

From Seed to Harvest

Books about Growing Food

by Gillian Engberg

Preschool through elementary school

In a time of epidemic childhood obesity, when more and more public schools have dispensed with recess and serve low-nutrition, fast-food meals to their students, there is a grassroots revolution afoot—a “delicious revolution,” as chef Alice Waters calls it. Waters and other chefs, educators, and parents across the country are working together to reconnect children with what they eat. Recent studies show clear links between healthy food and improved student behavior and test scores, and healthy eating begins when children’s imaginations, knowl-

edge, and hands-on experiences move them toward a new relationship with food and the science behind it.

The following list of picture books, poetry, and informational titles focuses on the many ways that foods—from vegetables to fruits to grains—are grown. Even the fictional stories, many of which are filled with classroom gardening projects, will easily find a place in botany, ecology, health, and other science units. “Teaching children about food changes their lives,” says chef Waters, and the books below will offer children a connection

to healthy food and to the exciting, infinitely rich world of edible, growing things.

Picture Books

Cherry, Lynne. *How Groundhog’s Garden Grew*. 2003. 40p. Scholastic/Blue Sky, \$15.95 (0-439-32371-1); paper, \$5.95 (0-439-56065-9).

Preschool–Gr. 3. Cherry tells a captivating, informative story about plants, gardening, and environmental respect in this tale of a groundhog and squirrel who plant a garden, marvel at its growth, and enjoy the harvest together. Detailed illustrations incorporate borders of labeled seedlings and plants, highlighting a diverse array of wildlife.

Doyle, Malachy. *Jody’s Beans*. Illus. by Judith Allibone. 2002. 32p. Candlewick, paper, \$6.99 (0-7636-1713-X).

Preschool–Gr. 2. Part family story, part simple gardening manual, this appealing Read and Wonder picture book focuses on



***Pumpkins* by Ken Robbins records the life cycle of a seasonal favorite through spectacular photos and simple text.**

Jody's loving grandfather, who teaches her how to plant runner beans and care for them through the seasons until the beans are ready to be picked, cooked, and eaten. Allibone's delicate line-and-watercolor pictures are filled with facts about gardening.

Ehlert, Lois. *Growing Vegetable Soup*. 1987. 32p. Harcourt, \$16 (0-15-232575-1); Voyager, paper, \$6 (0-15-232580-8).

Preschool–Gr. 2. Vivid rainbow colors and bold shapes illustrate this joyous and practical account of family gardening that culminates with “the best soup ever.” Ehlert's *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z* (Harcourt, 1989) makes a good companion book.

Garland, Sarah. *Eddie's Garden and How to Make Things Grow*. 2004. 40p. Frances Lincoln, \$15.95 (1-84507-015-1); paper, \$11.42 (1-84507-089-5).

K–Gr. 3. Eddie and his little sister, Lily, ask their mother for a garden of their own. Together they plant seeds, hunt slugs, harvest vegetables, and eat their homegrown produce. Bits of humor and colorful, appealing visual details, such as a bean-pole teepee, will draw children's attention. A closing section explains how to grow the plants featured in Eddie's garden and discusses soil, seeds, pests, hazards, and indoor container gardening.

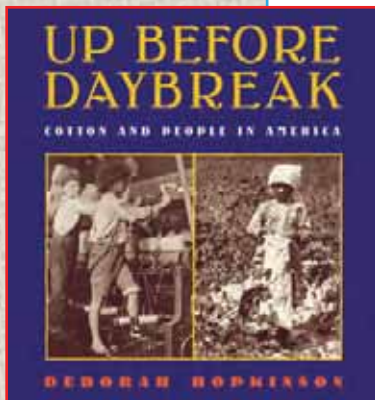
Henderson, Kathy. *And the Good Brown Earth*. 2004. 40p. Candlewick, \$15.99 (0-7636-2301-6).

Preschool. A grandmother and her young grandson create side-by-side vegetable gardens in this celebration of growing things that evokes in both words and mixed-media illustrations the delicious, “squashy,” “squelching” physicality of garden work. This title is a good match with Zoe Hall's *The Surprise Garden* (Scholastic, 1998).

Holub, Joan. *The Garden That We Grew*. Illus. by Hiroe Nakata. 2001. 32p. Puffin, paper, \$3.99 (0-14-131198-3).

K–Gr. 2. This rhyming story in the

Fresh Perspectives on American History



Up Before Daybreak: Cotton and People in America

Deborah Hopkinson

Grades 4–8 • 128 pages

0-439-63901-8 • \$18.99

★ “A model of superb nonfiction writing...The voices of the children [are] vivid and personal.” —Kirkus Reviews, starred review

★ “Fine writing...Stories of real people...sharply focus the dramatic history, as do arresting archival photos.” —Booklist, starred review

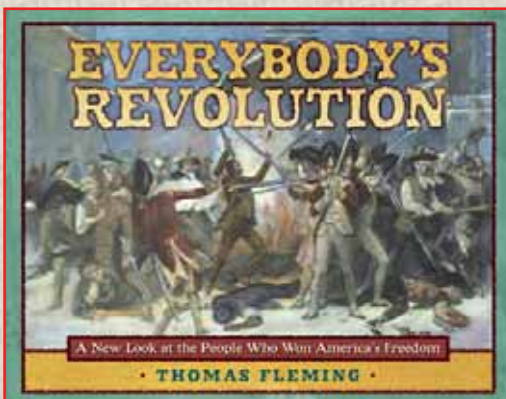
Saving the Buffalo

Albert Marrin

Grades 4–8 • 128 pages

0-439-71854-6 • \$18.99

The amazing story of how the buffalo reached the brink of extinction within the span of a century, and how it was saved.



Everybody's Revolution: A New Look at the People Who Won America's Freedom

Thomas Fleming

Grades 4–8 • 96 pages

0-439-63404-0 • \$19.99

Did you know that women, African Americans, Jews, Native

Americans, Hispanics, and immigrants from many countries played leading roles in America's struggle for independence?

 SCHOLASTIC

www.scholastic.com



SCHOLASTIC and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

School Gardens

The following books offer fine starting points for educators who are interested in starting a garden as well as for those with established gardens who are seeking new ideas and support for their projects. Note that the National Gardening



Association's "Teacher's Room" at <http://www.kidsgardening.com/teachers.asp> includes grant opportunities for funding new gardens.

- **Creasy, Rosalind.** *Blue Potatoes, Orange Tomatoes: How to Grow a Rainbow Garden.* Illus. by Ruth Heller. 2000. 40p. Sierra Club, paper, \$7.95 (0-87156-919-1).

Gr. 1–4. This picture-book guide offers practical advice for creating a "rainbow garden" of edible plants: purple string beans, blue potatoes, yellow watermelons, and so on. Recipes are included, and Heller's bright and bountiful artwork is as decorative as it is informative.

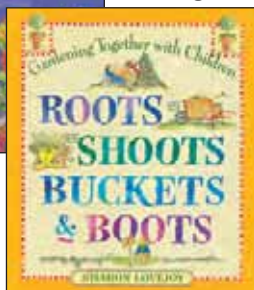
- **Krezel, Cindy.** *Kids' Container Gardening: Year-Round Projects for Inside and Out.* Photos by Bruce Curtis. 2005. 96p. Ball, paperback, \$14.95 (1-883052-43-2).

Gr. 5–8. This guide begins with the basics of handling young plants, learning the local gardening zone, and testing soil for dryness. The title's focus, though, is

container gardening projects and related craft ideas, organized by season.

- **Lovejoy, Sharon.** *Roots, Shoots, Buckets, and Boots: Gardening Together with Children.* 1999. 176p. Workman, \$24.95 (0-7611-1765-2); paper, \$13.95 (0-7611-1056-9). Adult. This title, aimed at adults who work with children,

offers a wonderful compendium of gardening basics, projects, and recipes. Extensive resource lists and tips, such as the plants that draw the most interest among young people, show Lovejoy's wealth of experience in working with gardens and kids.



- **Winckler, Suzanne.** *Planting the Seed: A Guide to Gardening.* 2002. 64p. Millbrook, \$25.26 (0-8225-0081-7); paper, \$7.95 (0-8225-0471-5).

Gr. 6–9. This slim, illustrated volume from the Exceptional Science Titles for Upper Grades series is not a complete reference, but there is plenty of useful information packed into the brief chapters. The focus on organic

gardening is particularly useful for eco- and health-minded students, and the book also addresses Native American gardening traditions and community and heirloom gardens.

Easy to Read series has clear, colorful illustrations that show children growing a garden and finally harvesting pumpkins, which they use for cookies, pies, and Halloween masks. Beginning readers will be drawn to the hands-on excitement as children make important things happen.

Lin, Grace. *The Ugly Vegetables.* 2001. 32p. Charlesbridge, \$16.95 (0-88106-336-3); paper, \$6.95 (1-57091-491-5).

K–Gr. 2. Illustrated with curlicues and dabs of bright, saturated color, this is the story of a young girl who envies the flowers in her neighbors' gardens, while her mother's garden is filled with wrinkled leaves and vines. Then the plants produce a wonderful crop of Chinese vegetables, and the neighbors gather to enjoy a savory soup that the girl and her mother make from their harvest. A recipe and glossary are included.

Näslund, Görel Kristina. *Our Apple Tree.* Illus. by Kristina Digman. 2005. 32p. Roaring Brook, \$15.95 (1-59643-052-4); paper, \$6.95 (1-59643-191-1).

Preschool–Gr. 2. In spare language, two children introduce the changes each season brings to their apple tree. Whimsical artwork showcasing the many varieties of apples will inspire kids to wonder about the incredible diversity found in an everyday fruit.

Perkins, Lynne Rae. *Home Lovely.* Illus. by Lynn Perline. 1995. 32p. Greenwillow, \$16.99 (0-688-13687-7).

Gr. 1–4. After moving to a new trailer home with her mom, who works during the day, Janelle busies herself by planting a vegetable garden, and a kind mailman shares his gardening tips. Realistic pen-and-ink and watercolor illustrations underscore this gracefully phrased story about

how gardens and cooking can bring people close.

Slawson, Michele Benoit. *Apple Picking Time.* Illus. by Deborah Kogan Ray. 1998. 32p. Random/Dragonfly, paper, \$6.99 (0-517-88575-1).

Preschool–Gr. 2. Recalling apple-picking times in her Washington State childhood, Slawson tells the story of a young girl's day in the orchard. Ray's golden-hued artwork adds strong visual appeal. Another good orchard story is Jody Fickes Shapiro's *Up, Up, Up! It's Apple-Picking Time* (Holiday, 2003).

Wallace, Nancy Elizabeth. *Seeds! Seeds!* 2004. 40p. Marshall Cavendish, \$16.95 (0-7614-5159-5). Also available in a DVD or video recording from Nutmeg Media.

K–Gr. 3. In this bright, informative story accompanied by Wallace's

signature cut-paper collages, a small bear receives a seed collection from his grandfather, and as he plants some and makes art with others, he learns about germination and growth cycles. Pair this title with Ken Robbins' *Seeds* (Simon & Schuster/Atheneum, 2005) and Helene Jordan's classic *How a Seed Grows* (HarperTrophy, 1992), a title in the fine Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science series.

Poetry

Poetry is a wonderful way to introduce children to the science and magic of garden life and growing food. The following poetry collections are a good place to start.

Cyrus, Kurt. *Oddhopper Opera: A Bug's Garden of Verses*. 2001. 32p. Harcourt, \$16 (0-15-202205-8).

Gr. 3–5. From early spring rains to late summer harvest, the garden in this picture-book poetry collection teems with activity, all of it described in witty verse and beautiful visual detail.

Havill, Juanita. *I Heard It from Alice Zucchini: Poems about the Garden*. Illus. by Christine Davenier. 2006. 32p. Chronicle, \$15.95 (0-8118-3962-1).

K–Gr. 3. Havill's collection of verse captures the awe-inspiring science of growing things. Some selections are factual, even instructional, and Davenier extends the fanciful imagery in scenes of lively, gossiping plants and animals.

Shannon, George. *Busy in the Garden*. Illus. by Sam Williams. 2006. 40p. Greenwillow, \$15.99 (0-06-000464-9).

Preschool–Gr. 2. There are no quiet, drowsy flowerbeds in this book. The gardens in Shannon's poems are filled with rowdy, joyful motion and noise that's sure to inspire listener participation. Williams' watercolor-and-pencil illustrations show children and animals digging in vegetable rows.

Informational Books

Ancona, George. *Harvest*. 2001. 48p. Marshall Cavendish, \$15.95 (0-7614-5086-6).

Gr. 4–7. Both individual workers and crops are introduced in this photo-essay that follows Mexican migrant farm laborers, whose stories are told in their own words. Superb photos show both the backbreaking work and the specifics of how each fruit and vegetable is grown and picked.

Bardoe, Cheryl. *Gregor Mendel: The Friar Who Grew Peas*. Illus. by Jos. A. Smith. 2006. 40p. Abrams, \$18.95 (0-8109-5475-3).

Gr. 2–4. This picture-book biography introduces young people to Mendel's famous experiments with plants and their seeds. The clear explanations and bright paintings of flourishing pea vines bring the science close.

Bial, Raymond. *Corn Belt Harvest*. 1991. 48p. Houghton, \$18 (0-395-56234-1).

Gr. 2–6. Sharp color photographs dominate each page of Bial's informative photo-essay, which traces what happens to corn from planting to harvest and storage.

Eagen, Rachel. *The Biography of Bananas*. 2005. 32p. Crabtree, \$17.94 (0-7787-2483-2); paper, \$8.95 (0-7787-2519-7).

Gr. 4–7. This entry in the How Did That Get Here? series, which also includes titles about sugar and spices, covers how the most popular fruit in the world is grown and includes a short history of the banana business.

Farmer, Jacqueline. *Pumpkins!* Illus. by Phyllis Limbacher Tildes. 2004. 32p. Charlesbridge, \$16.95 (1-57091-557-1); paper, \$6.95 (1-57091-558-X).

Gr. 1–3. With a fine balance of information and activities, Farmer introduces the pumpkin plant—its

WEB CONNECTIONS

The Edible Schoolyard, the Center for Ecoliteracy, the National Gardening Association, and several other organizations provide online resources for developing school gardening programs and teaching students about the everyday food they eat. For a list of select garden-related Web sites, visit the Book Links Web site at <http://www.ala.org/BookLinks> and click on "Web Connections."

anatomy, growth cycle, and historical importance. Bright watercolor-and-pencil illustrations show multicultural kids carving a pumpkin, toasting the seeds, and making a pie. Other excellent books on the topic are Gail Gibbons' *The Pumpkin Book* (Holiday, 1999); Nancy Elizabeth Wallace's *Pumpkin Day* (Marshall Cavendish, 2002); Ken Robbins' *Pumpkins* (Roaring Brook, 2006); and George Levenson's award-winning *Pumpkin Circle: The Story of a Garden* (Tricycle, 1999).

Gibbons, Gail. *Apples*. 2000. 32p. Holiday, \$17.95 (0-8234-1497-3); paper, \$6.95 (0-8234-1669-0).

Gr. 2–3. With her familiar format of color-washed drawings and brief text, Gibbons shows an apple tree's progress through the seasons, from blossom to harvest, and includes activities, charts of apple varieties, and instructions for growing.

Levenson, George. *Bread Comes to Life: A Garden of Wheat and a Loaf to Eat*. Photos by Shmuel Thaler. 2004. 32p. Tricycle, \$15.95 (1-58246-114-7).

Preschool–Gr. 1. Simple, rhyming text and beautiful, close-up color photographs celebrate the world's most ancient food that is still part of the modern diet. Pages follow a baker step-by-step, beginning with the wheat seeds he plants, harvests, and grinds.

Cookbooks for Kids

What's the best way to encourage kids to learn about and eat healthy food? "Give them the opportunity to prepare it with their own hands," says Mollie Katzen, whose cookbook *Salad People and More Real Recipes* is joined below by other great titles that combine food awareness with recipes and kitchen activities just for kids.

- Gillies, Judi, and Jennifer Glossop. *The Jumbo Vegetarian Cookbook*. Illus. by Louise Phillips. 2002. 256p. Kids Can, \$14.95 (1-55074-977-3).

Gr. 4–8. Much more than just a cookbook, this sprawling title, sprinkled with cartoon illustrations, introduces basic nutrition and how to achieve it with a vegetarian diet. Recipes and kitchen tips combine with discussions of the types of vegetarianism and the environmental and health reasons for a meatless diet, as well as common ingredients in vegetarian cooking.



- Katzen, Mollie. *Salad People and More Real Recipes: A New Cookbook for Preschoolers and Up*. 2005. 96p. Tricycle, \$17.95 (1-58246-141-4). Preschool–Gr. 2, with adult guidance. Katzen, whose many cookbooks include the original Moosewood titles for adults, offers another title for preschoolers and up, following *Pretend Soup* (Tricycle, 1994) and *Honest Pretzels* (Tricycle, 1999). This title presents a range of kid-friendly vegetarian

recipes in an artistic, innovative format, and includes plenty of tips for adults on communicating concepts and preparing a safe, nurturing cooking space for kids.

- Yolen, Jane, and Heidi E. Y. Stemple. *Fairy Tale Feasts: A Literary Cookbook for Young Readers and Eaters*. Illus. by Philippe Béha. 2006. 224p. Interlink/Crocodile, \$24.95 (1-56656-643-6). K–Gr. 3. From prehistoric times, stories and food have been "close companions," according to Yolen and her daughter, Stemple, who created this creative and beautifully illustrated book that features Yolen's retellings of well-known fairy tales accompanied by Stemple's kid-friendly recipes.

Maestro, Betsy. *How Do Apples Grow?* Illus. by Giulio Maestro. 1991. 32p. HarperTrophy, paper, \$4.99 (0-06-445117-8).

K–Gr. 3. This simple, fully illustrated title in the Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science series explains how apples develop. Pastel drawings show well-labeled close-ups and cutaways of flowers and fruit. Pair this title with Nancy Elizabeth Wallace's *Apples, Apples, Apples* (Marshall Cavendish, 2004).

Pfeffer, Wendy. *Gather Together: Celebrating the Harvest Season*. Illus. by Linda Bleck. 2006. 40p. Dutton, \$17.99 (0-525-47669-5).

Gr. 1–4. This global overview

of the harvest season explains the relationship between the tilt of the earth and the seasons, briefly traces the history of farming and harvest celebrations, and ties these traditions to the Thanksgiving holiday. Simple science experiments, a recipe, and other related activities are included. Pair this title with Cris Peterson's *Harvest Year* (Boyd's Mills, 1996), a photo-essay featuring crops produced across the United States.

Ray, Deborah Kogan. *Lily's Garden*. 2002. 32p. Roaring Brook, \$16.95 (0-7613-1593-4).

K–Gr. 3. In letters to her grandmother in California, Lily describes

each month in a year on her family's Maine farm. Sidebars and boxes present a wealth of facts about gardening and cultivating plants, as well as recipes related to each season's harvest.

Rendon, Marcie R., and Cheryl Walsh Bellville. *Farmer's Market: Families Working Together*. 2001. 48p. Carolrhoda, \$23.93 (1-57505-462-0).

Gr. 4–6. Illustrated with photographs, this introduction to farmers' markets, focused on two Minnesota truck-farming families, spotlights moments in the growing season, from planting greenhouse seedlings to fall harvest, and shows what's so special about farmers' markets—you meet the people who grow the food.

Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *How Do You Raise a Raisin?* Illus. by Craig Brown. 2003. 32p. Charlesbridge, \$16.95 (1-57091-397-8); paper, \$6.95 (1-57091-398-6).

Preschool–Gr. 2. In lighthearted, rhyming queries, Ryan wonders how raisins grow and go from grapevines to grocery stores. Her questions are answered in straightforward text. Sturdy color art depicts rows of Californian grapevines, as well as the cutting, drying, and collecting processes.

Schaefer, Lola M. *Pick, Pull, Snap! Where Once a Flower Bloomed*. Illus. by Lindsay Barrett George. 2003. 32p. Greenwillow, \$15.99 (0-688-17834-0).

Preschool–Gr. 1. This attractive lift-the-flap title offers a basic introduction to plant growth. Rhythmic, poetic text describes a plant's parts and explains its growth, and each page folds out to reveal the mature plant. Inviting, realistic color art shows plants that produce common foods, and back matter includes gardening directions.

Gillian Engberg is the young adult books editor at *Booklist* magazine and serves on the board of a nonprofit group devoted in part to city farming.