

# BRINGING THE GARDEN INTO YOUR LANGUAGE ARTS LESSONS THROUGH LITERATURE AND WRITING

Lessons compiled by

The New Jersey Agricultural Society's



Program

March 2022

## Table of Contents

Books That Bring the Garden into the Classroom .....	3
Garden Books for Little Ones: PreK-1 .....	8
Grow Your Own Folk and Fairy Tales .....	9
Karl, Get Out of the Garden! Carolus Linnaeus and Naming of Everything!.....	11
Seed School.....	12
Sophie’s Squash.....	14
Talia and the Rude Vegetables.....	15
Teaching Idioms: What do they Mean?.....	17
What happens in the Garden when there is Nobody There?.....	19
Writing in the Garden.....	21



## **Books That Bring the Garden into the Classroom**

From the New Jersey Agricultural Society Learning Through Gardening program

### Apples

The Apple Orchard Riddle, Margaret McNamara

Apples, Gail Gibbons

Folks Call Me Appleseed John, Andrew Glass

How Do Apples Grow, Betsy Maestro?

How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World, Marjorie Priceman

The Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree, Gail Gibbons

### Bees and Insects

Bee Dance by Rick Chrustowski

The Beeman, Laurie Krebs and Valeria Cis

Give Bees A Chance, Bethany Barton

The Honeybee Man, Lela Nargi and Kyrsten Brooker

The Honey Makers, Gail Gibbons

Oh Beyond Bugs! All About Insects, Tish Rabe

Waiting for Wings, Lois Elhert

Compost, Soil, and Worms Compost Stew, Mary McKenna Siddals

Diary of a Worm, Doreen Cronin

Dirt, Steve Tomecek

An Earthworm's Life, John Himmelman

Garbage Helps Our Garden Grow, Linda Glaser

Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt, Kate Messner

Yucky Worms, Vivian French

### The Environment

All the Water in the World, George Ella Lyon and Katherine Tillotson

Be A Friend to Trees, Patricia Lauber

Did a Dinosaur Drink This Water? Robert E. Wells

Food Chains and the Food Web in Our Backyard, Secrets of the Garden, Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld

One Well, The Story of Water on Earth, Rochelle Strauss

Trout Are Made of Trees, April Pulley Sayre

### Fruits

Bananas! Jacqueline Farmer

Beautiful Bananas! Elizabeth Laird

Cranberries, Fruit of the Bogs, Diane L. Burns

Eating the Alphabet, Lois Ehlert  
The First Strawberries, Joseph Bruchac  
Go, Go Grapes, A Fruit Chant, April Pulley Sayre  
The Little Mouse, The Red Ripe Strawberry and The Big Hungry Bear, Don and Audrey  
Wood Lunch, Denise Fleming

#### Garden Fantasy

The Boy Who Loved Broccoli, Sarah A. Creighton  
Creepy Carrots, Aaron Reynolds  
Grandpa Green, Lane Smith  
I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato, Lauren Child  
Jack and the Hungry Giant, Loreen Leedy  
June 29. 1999, David Wiesner  
The Leaf Men and the Brave Good Bugs, William Joyce  
The Little Gardener, Emily Hughes  
My Garden, Kevin Henkes  
Pinkalicious Fairy House, Victoria Kann  
The Tale of Peter Rabbit, Beatrix Potter  
Weslandia, Paul Fleischman

#### Garden Poetry

The Popcorn Astronauts, Deborah Ruddell  
Seeds, Bees, Butterflies and More! Poems for Two Voices, Carole Gerber

#### Gardening

Anywhere Farm, by Phyllis Root  
The Art Garden, Penny Harrison Bloom, Deborah Diesen  
City Green, DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan  
The Curious Garden, Peter Brown  
The Extraordinary Gardener, Sam Boughton  
First Peas to the Table, Susan Grigsby  
Flower Garden, Eve Bunting  
The Gardener, Sarah Stewart  
Grow Happy, Jon Lasser  
Growing Colors, by Bruce McMillan  
How Does My Garden Grow? Gerda Muller  
If You Plant a Seed, Kadir Nelson  
In the Garden, Gallimard Jeunesse  
Jack's Garden, Henry Cole  
Linnea in Monet's Garden, Christina Bjork, Lena Anderson  
The Night Gardener, The Fan Brothers  
Planting a Rainbow, Lois Elhert  
Sunflower House, Eve Bunting  
The Surprise Garden, Zoe Hall  
Up, Down, and Around, Katherine Ayres  
Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt, Kate Messner

What's in the Garden? Marianne Berkes  
Zinnia's Flower Garden, Monica Wellington  
Zora's Zucchini, Katherine Pryor

### Grains

Bread Comes to Life, George Levenson  
The Little Red Hen, Paul Galdone or Jerry Pinkney  
The Little Red Hen Makes a Pizza, Philemon Sturges  
One Grain of Rice, Demi  
Pancakes, Pancakes! Eric Carle

### Plant Parts and Life Cycles

The Amazing Life Cycle of Plants, Kay Barnham  
Amazing Plant Powers, Loreen Leedy  
Arlo Rolled, by Susan Pearson  
Cooking With Sunshine, How Plant Make Food, Ellen Lawrence  
From Bulbs to Daffodils, Ellen Weiss  
From Seed to Plant, Allan Fowler  
From Seed to Plant, Gail Gibbons  
A Fruit is a Suitcase for Seeds, Jean Richards Living  
Sunlight, Molly Bang, Penny Chisholm  
Oh Say Can You Seed? All About Flowering Plants, Bonnie Worth  
One Bean, Anne Rockwell  
Photosynthesis: Changing Sunlight into Food, Bobbie Kalman  
Pick, Pull, Snap! Where Once a Flower Bloomed, Lola M. Schaefer  
Plants Can't Sit Still, Rebecca E. Hirsch  
Plants Feed Me, Lizzy Rockwell  
Plants in Winter, Joanna Cole  
Plants That Never Ever Bloom, Ruth Heller  
Seed, Soil, and Sun, Cris Peterson  
Tops and Bottoms, Janet Stevens  
What Do Roots Do, Kathleen V. Kudlinski

### Pumpkins

How Many Seeds in a Pumpkin? Margaret McNamara  
Pumpkin Circle: The Story of a Garden, George Levenson

Pumpkin Day, Nancy Elizabeth Wallace Pumpkins on the Vine, Theresa Doyle-Jones  
Too Many Pumpkins, Linda White

### Seeds

The Bad Seed, Jory John  
The Carrot Seed, Ruth Kraus, Crockett Johnson  
The Empty Pot, Demi  
Flip, Float, Fly, Seeds on the Move, JoAnn Early Macken  
The Magic School Bus Plants Seeds, Joanna Cole

Miss Rumphius, Barbara Cooney  
A Place to Grow, Stephanie Bloom  
Seeds: A Book About How Living Things Grow, Joanna Coles  
A Seed in Need, Sam Godwin  
A Seed is the Start by Melissa Stewart  
A Seed is Sleepy, Dianna Hutts Aston  
One Little Seed, Elaine Greenstein  
Seed School, Growing Up Amazing, Joan Holub  
The Tiny Seed, Eric Carle  
What Will Grow? Jennifer Ward

### Vegetables

Eat Your Peas, Louise, Pegeen Snow  
Eating the Alphabet, Lois Ehlert  
Growing Vegetable Soup, Lois Ehlert  
Lunch, Denise Fleming  
Oliver's Vegetables, Vivian French  
Popcorn, Elaine Landau  
The Popcorn Book, Tomie De Paola  
Popcorn Country, by Cris Peterson  
Rah Rah Radishes, A Vegetable Chant, April Pulley Sayre  
Talia and the Rude Vegetables, Linda Elovitz Marshall  
Tops & Bottoms, Janet Stevens  
The Turnip, Jan Brett  
Two Old Potatoes and Me, John Coy, Carolyn Fisher  
The Ugly Vegetables, Grace Lin  
The Vegetables We Eat, Gail Gibbons

### Farms and Production

Century Farm, Cris Peterson  
Christmas Farm, Mary Lynn Ray  
Extra Cheese, Please! Cris Peterson  
Fantastic Farm Machines, Cris Peterson  
Farming, Gail Gibbons  
From Cocoa Beans to Chocolate, Ali Mitgutsch  
From T-Shirt to Cotton. by Robin Nelson  
Harvest Year, Cris Peterson  
Hey, Hey, Hay! A Tale of Bales and the Machines That Make Them, Christy Mihaly  
How Did That Get in My Lunchbox, Chris Butterworth  
How Monkeys Make Chocolate, Adrian Forsyth  
Pick a Circle, Gather Squares; A Fall Harvest of Shapes, Felicia Chernesky  
Right This Very Minute, Lisl H. Detlefsen

### Farms and Production

Sleep Tight Farm, Eugenie Doyle Smart  
About Chocolate, A Sweet History, Sandra Markle

The Story of Chocolate, C.J. Polin  
Weaving the Rainbow George, Ella Lyon

Biographies

Farmer George Plants a Nation, Peggy Thomas  
George Washington Carver for Kids, Peggy Thomas  
George Washington Carver, The Peanut Wizard, Laura Driscoll  
In the Garden with Dr. Carver, Susan Grigsby  
John Deere, That's Who, Tracy Maurer  
Karl, Get Out of the Garden! Carolus Linnaeus and the Naming of Everything Anita Sanchez  
A Picture Book of George Washington Carver, David A Adler  
Pioneer Plowmaker, A Story About John Deere, David R Collins  
A Weed is a Flower: The Life of George Washington Carver, Alike



## **Garden Books for Little Ones: PreK-1**

Ideas from the New Jersey Agricultural Society Learning Through Gardening program

### Up, Down, and Around by Katherine Ayres

This fun garden book shows little ones how different vegetables grow: corn grows up, carrots grow down, and cucumbers climb around and around. Your students will love doing hand motions as they recite the text with you.

### Lunch by Denise Fleming

This simple book about colors follows a hungry mouse as he eats an assortment of fruits and vegetables such as a crisp white turnip, a tasty orange carrot, and shiny red apples.

### If You Plant a Seed by Kadir Nelson

This book, with its gorgeous, bold pictures, tells the story of a how a rabbit and a mouse plant a vegetable garden and how sharing is often the easiest path to choose. The pictures are so compelling you can just show them to little ones, and they will tell the story to you.

### Pick a Circle, Gather Squares A Fall Harvest of Shapes by Felicia Sanzari Chernesky

A trip to the pumpkin farm on a lovely October day turns into a hunt for shapes: oval eggs, square hay bales, diamond kites, and hexagon honeycombs. Read the book and launch your own hunt for shapes around the garden.

### Cheers for a Dozen Ears a Summer Crop of Counting by Felicia Sanzari Chernesky

The children in this book use fun rhymes to count the fruits and vegetables their mother buys at the farm stand.

### The Leaf Man by Lois Ehlert

"A Leaf Man's got to go where the wind blows." The pictures in this beautiful book all are made from autumn leaves. After reading about the Leaf Man's wind-blown travels, your students can collect leaves and make their own leaf men. This is a wonderful way to launch a discussion about why the autumn leaves look so colorful.

### What Will Grow? by Jennifer Ward

With charming illustrations and vivid descriptions, this book demonstrates that seeds come in a vast number of shapes, colors, and sizes. Pair this book with a seed-sorting activity, asking students to sort a variety of seeds by size, shape, and color.

New Jersey Learning Standards English Language Arts: PreK: RL.PK.1-6 K-1: R.1-6



## GROW YOUR OWN FOLK AND FAIRY TALES

A lesson from the New Jersey Agricultural Society Learning Through Gardening program

### OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Many of the favorite fairy and folk tales that young students explore in school can be easily connected to the garden. Students can grow the vegetables mentioned in the stories, compare different versions of the stories, and act out their favorite version using stick puppets.

GRADES: PreK-3

### STORIES:

#### Jack and the Beanstalk:

This classic story is easy to link with the garden. Grow pole beans in the classroom or start the beans in the classroom and transfer them to the garden in midMay. Be sure that your seed packet says, 'pole beans' and not 'bush beans.' Bush beans are the more common seeds found in stores, and they do not grow into a vine. Pair the Jack and the Beanstalk Story with the Learning Through Gardening lesson A Maze for Plants – Discovering Phototropism. In this lesson, shoe boxes are transformed into a plant maze by cutting a hole in the top and inserting cardboard obstacles the plant must grow around. Place a pot containing a pole bean seedling about two inches high on its side at the bottom of the maze. Close the shoe box and watch the plant wind around. When the plant reaches the top of the maze, it looks just like Jack's beanstalk. You can even decorate the maze before inserting the plant. Paint the inside blue, paint the bottom green, and glue cotton balls on the cardboard obstacles for clouds. Students can use cardboard to design Jack's cottage at the bottom and the giant's castle at the top. Then let the pole bean grow through the maze, and you have a stage for Jack and the Beanstalk. Students can make stick puppets and act out the story. There are so many versions of this story for students to read and compare. They can pick their favorites, and in small groups they can create dialog for a play. Then they can act out their Jack in the Beanstalk story in the garden or using their plant mazes.

Stone Soup By Marcia Brown

Recreate this classic tale in the classroom by using fall vegetables harvested from your garden. Potatoes, turnips, parsnips, onions, and garlic are all perfect for a fall stew. You can adapt the story for spring garden salad by writing a version called Spoon Salad. Place a metal spoon in a bowl with plain green lettuce. Then have your student townspeople bring red lettuce, kale, spinach, peas, and Swiss chard to spruce up the salad.

### The Princess and the Pea by Hans Christian Anderson

Plant peas in your classroom to accompany this classic fairy tale. Read and compare different version of the story. And before you plant those pea seeds, have your students place them under a cushion and sit on them to see if you have any real princesses or princes in your midst. The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter Read about the mishaps of poor Peter Rabbit in Mr. McGregor's Garden. In small groups, ask your students to map out McGregor's Garden using the descriptions in the book. Have the students use string or yarn to map out their versions of McGregor's Garden outside and use the book to follow Peter's route. List the vegetables that Mr. McGregor is growing. What season do you think it is? Could all those vegetables be grown together in New Jersey?

## **NEW JERSEY LEARNING STANDARDS**

English Language Arts: PreK: RL.PK.1,2,3 K:R.K.1-7 1:RL.1.1-4,,6,7,9 2:RL.2.1-7,9 3:RL.3.1-4,6,7,



## **Karl, Get Out of the Garden! Carolus Linnaeus and the Naming of Everything**

By Anita Sanchez

Lesson ideas from the New Jersey Agricultural Society Learning Through Gardening program

GRADES: 3-5

**SYNOPSIS:** Carolus (Karl) Linnaeus started off as a curious child who loved exploring the garden. Despite his intelligence—and his mother's scoldings—he was a poor student, preferring to be outdoors with his beloved plants and bugs. As he grew up, Karl's love of nature led him to take on an impossible task: to give a scientific name to every living thing on earth. The result was the Linnaean system—the basis for the classification system used by scientists around the world today. This charming book describes the challenges Karl Linnaeus faced when trying to name 12,000 different plants and insects, as well as the ridicule he first faced from the scientific community.

### **ACTIVITIES:**

- Start a class discussion and list all the challenges Karl faced when he began his quest to name all living things. Then make a list of the challenges children at your grade level face and discuss how students overcame them.
- Students develop a class-wide system of naming themselves based on their characteristics. The class must choose a common name as the first name and then each child chooses his own name based on what he likes most about himself.
- In small groups of three or four, students choose one vegetable or fruit that is grown in the school garden. The group researches the scientific name for that vegetable or fruit and then looks for other fruits and vegetables that are in the same immediate family with the same first name.
- In small groups or individually, students create a fictional fruit or vegetable and then create a Latin-sounding name for it.

### **New Jersey Learning Standards**

English Language Arts: 3:RI.3.1-7 4:RI.4.1,2,4 5:RI.5.1,2,4 Social Studies: 3-5:6.1.5.EconNM.4



## Seed School

By Joan Holub

Lesson ideas from the New Jersey Agricultural Society Learning Through Gardening program

**K-3 SYNOPSIS:** At seed school, seeds of all shapes and sizes learn what they need to know to grow up and become plants. They explore what plants need to grow, as well as pollination and photosynthesis. When winter comes, school is out, and they all disburse to go to sleep. While some of the seeds sprout and grow up in just one season, one odd-looking seed with a cap takes many years to become the strong oak he was destined to be.

### ACTIVITIES:

This fun and engaging book contains much information about seeds and what happens in the garden. Depending on the age of the students, the book can be read a few pages at a time, and the class can discuss the information and compare it to their garden or other experiments they have done in class.

- **Seed Sorting:** All but one of the seeds in Seed School know what they will be when they grow up. Students can do some seed sorting and discuss how the plants the seeds will become differ from one another. (See the Learning Through Gardening Lesson Seed Investigators.)
- **What Plants Need to Grow:** The seed school students discuss what they will need to grow up. Students can do experiments that prove plants need soil, sun, water, and air. (See the Learning Through Gardening Lesson Do Plants Really Need Light?)
- **Plants Can Sense Gravity:** The student seeds learn the top two rules of growing: stems grow up and roots grow down. Do an experiment that proves no matter which way a seed is pointed; the stems grow up and the roots grow down. (See the Learning Through Gardening Lesson Can Plants Sense Gravity? Discovering Gravitropism.)
- **How Do the Seasons Change Plants:** The seeds learn what will happen to them in each season. Students can make a picture timeline showing what will happen to a plant in the school garden during each season.
- **Photosynthesis:** The leaf librarian pays the seeds a visit to discuss photosynthesis and the process of making food for plants. Students can act out the process of photosynthesis. (See the Learning Through Gardening lesson You Are Made of Sunshine.)

- Pollination: Principal Bee buzzes into class to talk to the seeds about pollination. Students can act out the process of pollination in the classroom. (See the Learning Through Gardening lesson Pollination - A Sticky Situation or Bees or The Great Pollinators.)

**EXTENSIONS:** Turn the Seed School story or parts of it into a play that can be performed for another class. Discuss what other lessons might be taught to the seeds in seed school. Compare and discuss what children need to grow up amazing.

### **New Jersey Learning Standards**

Science: K.LS1.C 1.LS1.A D 2.LS2.A 3: LS1B English Language Arts: K:RI.K.1-4,6  
1:RI.1.1-4,6 2:RI.2.1-7 3:RI.3.1-



## Sophie's Squash

by Pat Zietlow Miller

Lesson ideas from the New Jersey Agricultural Society Learning Through Gardening program

GRADES: PreK-1

**SYNOPSIS:** On a trip to the farmers' market, Sophie chooses a butternut squash, but instead of letting her mom cook it, she names it Bernice. From then on, Sophie brings Bernice everywhere, despite her parents' gentle warnings that Bernice will soon begin to rot. As winter nears, Sophie does start to notice changes.... What's a girl to do when the squash she loves is in trouble?

### ACTIVITIES:

- Discuss and draw the life cycle of a squash.
- Explore decomposition. Place some favorite fruits and vegetables in a transparent plastic container with a top and watch what happens.
- Ask a local farmer to donate a butternut squash for each student. Have them draw a face on the squash, name their squash, and act out some of the activities Sophie did with Bernice.

Pair this book with: Sophie's Squash Goes to School by Pat Zietlow Miller **SYNOPSIS:** In this sequel to *Sophie's Squash*, Sophie takes Bernice's children, Bonnie and Baxter, with her when she goes to school for the first time. Sophie has no interest in making friends that aren't squash. This gently humorous read-aloud proves that making friends, just like growing squash, takes time.

- Ask students to brainstorm the best ways to make friends.
- Act out parts of the story using butternut squash.

New Jersey Learning Standards Science: PreK: 5.1.1-5, 5.3.1-4 K.LS1.C 1.LS1.A  
Language Arts: PreK: RL.PK.1,2,4,7 K:RL.K.1-10 1:RL.1.1-4,6



## TALIA AND THE RUDE VEGETABLES

by Linda Elovitz Marshall

Lesson ideas from the New Jersey Agricultural Society Learning Through Gardening program

### OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

How can a vegetable be rude? This is what Talia wonders when she misunderstands her grandmother when she is asked to gather root vegetables for a Rosh Hashanah stew. Talia searches the garden for twisted turnips, peculiar parsnips, and ornery onions and gives the perfect vegetables to the less fortunate.

GRADES: PreK-3

### OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to:

- explain that plants move toward the light, and why
- explain how they can prove plants move toward the light
- record the day-to-day results of an experiment

### ACTIVITIES TO GO WITH THIS BOOK:

- Investigate roots. What do they do for a plant?
- Plant roots. Root vegetables are great fall crops. They can be planted in September and harvested late in the fall. Plant some parsnips and turnips. Have your students ever seen, let alone eaten, these vegetables?
- Find out why and how Rosh Hashanah is celebrated.
- Make a Rosh Hashanah stew using the recipe in the back of the book.
- Explore alliterations: Talia finds garish garlic, crooked carrots, ornery onions, and twisted turnips. Why are these words fun to read? Explore using alliterations to describe other favorite fruits and vegetables.

Pair this book with: [The Turnip](#), by Jan Brett

**SYNOPSIS:** In this rendition of a classic folk tale, a badger family and their friends struggle to pull up a giant turnip. A rooster steps in, pulls out the turnip, and flies. No one knows that a mother bear in her underground den has kicked the turnip up through the soil to give the family room to sleep through the winter.

**ACTIVITIES:** Act out the story. Research different recipes for turnips. Plant, harvest and eat turnips.

## **NEW JERSEY LEARNING STANDARDS**

English Language Arts: PreK: RL.PK.1-6 K:RL.K.1-10 1:RL.1.1-4,6 2:RL.2.1-7  
3:RL.3.1-7 Science: PreK:5.1.1-5, 5.3.1-4 K:LS1.C 1:LS1.A 2:LS2.A 3:LS1.B Social  
Studies: PreK: 6.4 K-2: 6.1.2.CivicsCM.3



# TEACHING GARDEN IDIOMS: WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

A lesson from the New Jersey Agricultural Society Learning Through Gardening program

## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

We come from an agrarian society, so many of the idiomatic phrases we continue to use come from the garden or farm. Do your students know what an idiom is? Do they know what these garden idioms mean?

GRADES: 2-5

## OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to:

- understand and use idioms

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- List of garden idioms (attached)

## ACTIVITY

Discuss with students what an idiom is. Idioms are phrases that have a meaning quite different from its individual words. Unlike most sentences that have a literal meaning, idioms have a figurative meaning. A literal meaning is when each word in a sentence stays true to its actual meaning. A figurative meaning is when a combination of words means something entirely different than the individual words do.

Explain that many idioms we still use today come from a time when most people grew their own food in gardens or on farms. This is called an agrarian society. Tell students that today they are going to learn the meanings of some common garden idioms that people still say today.

Pair the students and give each pair one of the idioms in the table below. Tell the students they must:

- Research the meaning of the idiom.

- Draw a picture showing the literal meaning of the words in the idiom. For example, for “let grass grow under your feet,” students would draw a picture of feet with grass growing beneath them.

- Under the picture, write the figurative meaning of the idiom or what people mean when they say it. For example, under “let grass grow under your feet” students would write to waste time or neglect your responsibilities.

## **EVALUATION:**

Students share their pictures and the meaning of their idiom with the class.

## **EXTENSION:**

Challenge students to find other idioms we use in everyday language that have to do with the garden or agriculture.

## **NEW JERSEY LEARNING STANDARDS**

English Language Arts: 2:RL.2.4 3:RL.3.4 4:RL.4.4 5:RL.5.4

Common Garden Idioms:

- Apple of my eye
- Nip it in the bud
- Make a mountain of a molehill
- Garden variety
- Salad days
- Turn over a new leaf
- Lead you down the garden path
- Seed money
- To mend fences
- Life is a bowl of cherries
- Go to seed
- A bee in your bonnet
- Let grass grow under your feet
- Shake like a leaf
- Make a beeline
- Small potatoes
- Put down roots
- Dig deep
- The grass is always greener
- Reap what you sow
- Catch more bees with honey than with vinegar
- Kick the bucket
- A tough row to hoe

- Make hay while the sun shines



# WHAT HAPPENS IN THE GARDEN WHEN NOBODY IS THERE?

A lesson from the New Jersey Agricultural Society Learning Through Gardening program

## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

A school garden can be the spark for so many kinds of writing: personal or scientific journals, school garden newsletters, informative pieces on how to garden, persuasive pieces on why you should garden, all types of poetry – so why not fantasy writing? Our favorite garden-fantasy writing prompt is “What happens in the garden when nobody’s there?” This assignment encourages children of all ages to let their imaginations soar as they consider what could happen in a garden when no people are present.

GRADES: K-5

## OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to

- Write or draw a fantasy story about what happens in the school garden when there are no people around.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Suggested books (see Procedure section) to help stimulate discussion about fantasy scenarios in the garden.

## ACTIVITY

Teacher asks the question: “What do you imagine could happen in the garden when we are not there?”

Read one of these books to help put students in a fantasy mood:

The Leaf Men and the Brave Good Bugs, by William Joyce

The Little Gardener, by Emily Hughes

The Curious Garden, by Peter Brown

The Talking Vegetables, by Won-Ldy Paye and Margaret Lippert

Good Night, Fairies, by Kathleen Hague

Next, ask the class to brainstorm fantasy story ideas and make a list on the board with suggestions such as: Talking vegetables Fairies and gnomes Little people Bug wars Worm families Lives of small garden animals such as rabbits and mice Take the class out to the garden and let your students begin to draft their own garden fantasy.

### **EVALUATION:**

Completed garden fantasy story.

### **EXTENSION:**

Share the students' fantasy stories with the class. Ask the class to select four stories to turn into a play. In small groups, students write and perform the plays. Younger students can make stick puppets to illustrate their stories and can act them out in the garden. Make fairy houses from half-pint school milk cartons. Allow students to search for materials on the school grounds such as twigs, grass, straw, and pebbles. Glue these materials onto the milk cartons to make the houses. Place the houses in the school garden. Students can write paragraphs describing who lives in their miniature house.

### **NEW JERSEY LEARNING STANDARDS**

English Language Arts K:W.K.3 1:W.1.3 2:W.2.3 3:W.3.3.A-D, W.3.4 4:W.4.3.A-E, W.4.4 5:W.5.3.A-E; W.5.4



## WRITING IN THE GARDEN

A lesson from the New Jersey Agricultural Society Learning Through Gardening program

### OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

It is easy to link writing with the school garden. Your students will be learning something new every time they visit the garden. Give them the opportunity to share their knowledge through writing.

### OBJECTIVES

the student will be able to:

- write for a variety of purposes

### ACTIVITY:

**GARDEN JOURNALS:** Journals are an essential tool when teaching in the garden. It is impossible to plant seeds or teach any other hands-on lesson with 20+ students at once. Our recommendation is to teach in the garden using the approach teachers use when teaching small reading groups. While the teacher focuses on a small group, all the other students in the class have a task to work on, and if they have a question or don't understand something, they can quietly ask another student. Journals can be used the same way when visiting the garden. Children can write in their journals when the teacher is working with a small group.

The journals can be used in a variety of ways:

- Garden observations: What has changed in the garden since the last visit? Are there leaves that are yellow or have holes? Are some plants thriving while others are struggling? Students record their observations and hypothesize the reasons for the changes.
- Science experiments: Students record data for science experiments such as recording the growth of different plants or the amount of rainfall.
- Poetry: Teach several types of poetry and ask students to try them in the garden.

- Stories: Take notes for or write rough drafts of stories about the garden.
- Pictures: Younger students can draw pictures and practice writing words or sentences about the garden.
- Free writing: Record any feelings, questions, or ideas about the garden

**WRITING FOR AN AUDIENCE:** The garden is a wonderful opportunity for students to practice real writing for an audience. Every school garden needs support from community volunteers and businesses, and the best way to publicize your garden is for students to write about their gardening experiences. Ask students to write about everything they do in the garden: planting seeds, transplanting seedlings, weeding, battling garden pests, observing plant growth, and harvesting. Then post your students' writing on your teacher or school website or blog or publish them in the classroom or school newsletter. The students' writing will pique the community's interest and attract volunteers and donors to your garden.

**Types of Writing:**

- Younger students can make drawings and write words and sentences.
- Students can write paragraphs on different gardening subjects.
- Older students can write all types of essays: informative, descriptive, persuasive, or narrative. They can compare the garden in different weather and seasons.

**DONATION REQUESTS AND THANK YOU NOTES:** All schools have a wish list of items they would like for their gardens. Instead of teachers or parents approaching local businesses for potential donations, teach your students to write polite letters or emails requesting a donation. This is a great life skill for your students to learn. And what business is going to say no to a written request from an elementary student? When a donation is given, the students can then write thank-you notes, another useful skill.

**GARDEN PEN PALS:** Teach your students that gardening can be vastly different in different parts of the United States by becoming pen pals with a school in a different climate. Your New Jersey students will be very curious to discover how gardening is different in Arizona, Florida, or Maine. The National Agriculture in the Classroom organization has representatives in every state and can aid in pairing pen pals across the country.

## **NEW JERSEY LEARNING STANDARDS**

Language Arts: PreK:W.PK.1,2 K:W.K.1.2,3,7,8 1:W.1.2,3,7,8 2:W.1,2,3,7,8  
3:W.3.1.A-D, W.3.2.A-D, W.3.3.A-D W.4,7,8 4:W.4.1.A-D, W.4.2.A-E, W.3.3.A-E  
W.4.4,7,8 5:W.5.1.A-D, W.5.2.A-E; W.5.3.A-E, W.5.4,7