

What Happens in the Garden When Nobody's There?

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

Overview: 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?" Much like Anne Bowen and Barry Gott's book What Do Teachers Do (After You Leave School), 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

Objective: 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:

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

Procedure:

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:

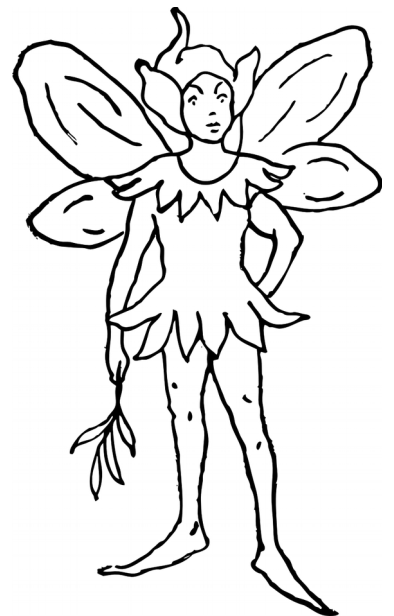
The Leaf Men and the Brave Good Bugs by *William Joyce*

The Little Gardener by *Emily Hughes*

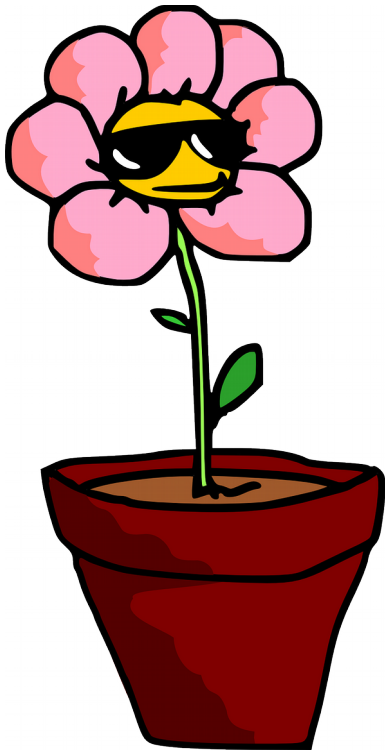
The Curious Garden by *Peter Brown*

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
the 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.

Extensions:

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.