

Gardening & Nutrition Story Books for Children

Richards, Jean. **A Fruit Is A Suitcase For Seeds.** *Millbrook Press.*

PreSchool-Grade 2-Richards's carefully worded information provides an excellent introduction to seeds, their purpose, and growth that should be easy for young children to grasp. On each page, one or two short lines of text appear beneath a large painting. Hariton's use of bright watercolors adds sensual appeal to her illustrations of various fruits, vegetables, animals, and habitats. This cleverly presented book can be used as a read-aloud discussion starter, as a prelude to planting seeds and observing their growth, or in preparation for dissecting fruits and vegetables in order to find the seeds inside.

Balian, Lorna. **A Garden For A Groundhog.** *Star Bright Books.*

Kindergarten-Grade 3. During the winter, the O'Learys feast on the bounty from their summer garden, and Groundhog hibernates in his burrow home beneath the apple tree. The O'Learys know that the groundhog does not come forth on February 2 to forecast the weather but rather to check if the O'Leary garden is planted. Mr. O'Leary's plan to keep the groundhog out of their vegetables has one flaw, though, which is humorously revealed on the final page.

Carney, Margaret. **At Grandpa's Sugar Bush.** *Kids Can Press Ltd.*

Alongside his grandpa, a young boy shares the tasks involved in making maple syrup the old-fashioned way. From tapping the trees to boiling the sap, the two spend many hours working side by side in the woods. Their reward is a delicious breakfast of pancakes and "the best syrup in the whole world." This is more than a story about syrup-making. It is the story of the grandfather's bond with nature and how he transfers this feeling to his grandson. Janet Wilson's rich oil paintings capture all the signs of spring's arrival in the sugar bush and the loving relationship between the boy and his grandpa.

Henderson, Kathy. **And The Good Brown Earth.** *Candlewick Press.*

Throughout the seasons, Gram and little Joe work independently but side-by-side on their gardens, planning, planting, watering, weeding, and waiting. At harvest time, both have grown beautiful vegetables--Gram's in neat rows; Joe's "higgledy-piggledy, tangly, FANTASTIC!" Henderson writes in simple, musical poetry that evokes the delicious, "squashy," "squelching" physicality of garden work, and the mixed-media illustrations of a garden teeming with plants and creatures have a waxy texture that, while sometimes indistinct, nicely extends the awe and mystery in the refrain: "The good brown earth got on with doing what the good brown earth does best." Best, though, is Joe's freedom to discover, follow his instincts, and create something wonderful on his own.

Creasy, Rosalind, **Blue Potatoes, Orange Tomatoes.** *Sierra Club.*

An introduction to organic gardening which explains how to grow a cornucopia of fruits and vegetables in unexpected colors, outlining simple guidelines for planning, planting, caring for, and troubleshooting a rainbow garden. Also includes some special recipes.

McCloskey, Robert. **Blueberries For Sal.** *Penguin Group.*

This simple story of a mother and daughter picking blueberries, and a mother bear and baby bear eating blueberries, does a perfect job depicting the sweetness of the mother/child relationship. It shows the protective nature of loving mothers and the security a child feels when with his/her mother. And it's a great example of two little families preparing for winter by picking (or eating, as the case may be) blueberries.

DePaola, Tomie. **Charlie Needs A Cloak.** *Scholastic Inc.*

Charlie needs a cloak, and this book tells the story, from start to finish, of how he goes about to make one. It takes readers through the year, From spring sheep shearing through sewing by the winter fire, showing Charlie going through each step to create his own cloak from raw materials.

Heller, Ruth. **Chickens Aren't The Only Ones.** *Penguin Group.*

Children will enjoy listening to you read this delightful book about egg-laying animals and their unique eggs. The colorful illustrations in this story are vivid and make the book come alive with fascinating detail. The words in rhyme tell this story in an informational, but highly interesting way that will attract children. This book would be an excellent resource for children beginning to learn about egg-laying animals.

Gibbons, Gail. **Chicks & Chickens.** *Holiday House, Inc.*

Gibbons takes a look at how chicken eggs are developed for human consumption and at how fertilized eggs develop into embryos and finally into fuzzy little baby chicks. The behaviour of chicks, hens, and roosters is discussed, and descriptions of the different breeds of chickens across America are provided. Once again Gibbons provides a colourful, accessible account of this familiar, domesticated bird.

Reynolds, Aaron. **Chicks and Salsa.** *Bloombury U.S.A. Children's Books.*

What happens at Nuthatcher Farm when the chickens get tired of the same old chicken feed? The rooster hatches a plan! With a pinch of genius, a dash of resourcefulness, and a little pilfering from the farmer's garden, the chickens whip up a scrumptious snack of chips and salsa. When the rest of the barnyard gets a whiff of the spicy smells and want to join in, it can mean only one thing . . . FIESTA! But when the big day arrives, all their spicy southwestern supplies are gone! Could Mr. and Mrs. Nuthatcher have caught on to the flavor craze?

Siddals, Mary McKenns. **Compost Stew.** *Crown Publishing Group.*

From eggshells to wiggly worms, this delightful recipe in bouncy verse features items—some familiar and some not so—that are fit for the home compost bin and will nourish Mother Earth. Vibrant collage illustrations use recycled and found materials to further a timely message. And to keep young environmental chefs fully informed about composting do's and don'ts, there's a note in the back about what's *not* fit for the bin.

Koontz, Robin. **Composting Nature's Recyclers.** *Picture Window Books Publication.*

Dead leaves, food scraps, and grass clippings for lunch? Small animals, fungi, and bacteria called decomposers turn trash into a tasty compost treat. Learn more about compost and how you can use it in your garden or yard.

Stevens, Janet and Crummel, Susan Stevens. **Cook-A-Doodle-Do.** *Harcourt Books, Inc.*

Take an old family recipe, add four funny friends, mix in some hilarious cooking confusion, and you have a delicious picture-book treat for children of all ages!

Older, Jules. **Cow.** *Charlesbridge Publishing.*

This book will tickle the "funny bone" of any young reader (not to mention any adults in the neighborhood) and provide them with all the information they ever wanted to know about one of Mother Nature's most amazing creatures. If you like cows, ice cream, great pictures, or just a good laugh, you'll love COW. Ever wondered why an ice-cream sundae isn't called an ice-cream Thursday? Having trouble telling a Jersey from a Holstein? Confused about the difference between a cow and a bull? COW has the answers and much, much more.

Cronin, Doreen. **Diary of a Worm.** *Harper Collins Publishers.*

Written in diary form, this truly hilarious picture book tracks the ins and outs of a worm's life from the perspective of the worm family's young son. Except for the fact that he can't chew gum or have a dog, the boy likes being a worm. He never has to go to the dentist ("No cavities--no teeth, either"), he never gets in trouble for tracking mud through the house, and he never has to take a bath. As long as he can remember Mom's rule "Never bother Daddy when he's eating the newspaper," all is well.

Sears, William, M.D., and Sears, Martha, R.N. **Eat Healthy, Feel Great.** *Little, Brown and Company.*

What a wonderful resource for parents who are trying to "do the right thing" -- to teach their children healthy eating habits in the midst of a society that promotes the fast, processed, and packaged. Dr. Sears categorizes food into green light/yellow light/red light groups, and it's a concept children readily understand. The text is simple and clear, and the message is presented in a fun way. This book would be a big help to any parents interested in changing their families' eating habits for the better. There are parts in the book that are just for parents: they explain nutrition, as well as make suggestions on how to incorporate more "green light" foods in the family's meals.

Gibbons, Gail. **Farming.** *Holiday House Inc.*

Gibbons depicts aspects of that life with her characteristic bright colors and stylized forms in a conceptual space that is intended to portray not one particular farm but a universal one. Every season brings its own specific chores, indoors and out, its own crops and its own food. There are the forces of nature, and the ways the farmer harnesses or copes with the elements using mechanical devices. Despite an overuse of

the passive voice ("The vegetable garden is planted . . . water is lugged . . . fields are fertilized") this is a good addition to the author's energetic how-to books. Ages 4-8.

Gibbons, Gail. **From Seed to Plant.** *Holiday House, Inc.*

The cover of this book has the title written in large, green font and it's not too wordy for kids. The illustration on the front cover is very colorful and would be appealing to young children. The content of this book is excellent. Gail Gibbons provides accurate information about plants in this book in a manner that is suitable for children. She researched the topic and worked with Bob Welch of Shearer's Greenhouses in Bradford, Vermont. At the end of the book she presents an exciting project for kids called A "From Seed to Plant" Project that ties in directly with the book. Additionally, she lists fun facts about seeds and plants. For example, did you know that some plants eat insects? Kids will love the end sections. The illustrations in this book are outstanding.

Rockwell, Lizzy. **Good Enough To Eat.** *Harper Collins Publishers.*

Kindergarten-Grade 3-This picture book about healthy eating begins at the beginning: food is necessary for one's well-being and it tastes good, too. Six categories of nutrients are introduced: carbohydrates, protein, fat, water, vitamins, and minerals. Digestion is described, as is the Food Guide Pyramid. Five recipes are given at the end. Every bit of information is illustrated with a large or small picture, sometimes accompanied by labels or dialogue balloons.

Ehlert, Lois. **Growing Vegetable Soup.** *Reed Business Information, Inc.*

PreSchool-Grade 1 This is the boldest, brassiest garden book to hit the market, and what a delight. Intensely colored graphics capture the complete growing process from seed to cooking pot, with the focus on the plants. The unseen narrator describes the process of growing vegetable soup, from preparing the tools and digging holes for the seeds to weeding plants; picking vegetables; washing, chopping, and cooking them and finally enjoying the homemade soup while planning to grow more next year. It's a fresh presentation of the gardening cycle with a joyful conclusion, and the added attraction of an easy and tasty recipe for vegetable soup on the flyleaf. A book to help nourish healthy readers.

Hooper, Meredith. **Honey Cookies.** *Frances Lincoln Children's Books.*

For young Ben, nothing is better than his grandmother's honey biscuits. But what exactly goes into making this special treat? Grandma decides it's a good time for Ben to find out. When he learns how to make honey biscuits, he doesn't just find out how to bake biscuits, he also discovers where all the ingredients in the recipe come from and whose help he really needs. Alison Bartlett's warm, vibrant illustrations accentuate Meredith Hooper's simple, lively text. Including an easy recipe for honey biscuits, this is a perfect introduction to food and cooking for very young readers.

Cherry, Lynne. **How Groundhog's Garden Grew.** *The Blue Sky Press.*

Little Groundhog learns how to plant and tend to his own food garden through every season in this beautifully-illustrated, thoroughly researched picture book by naturalist Lynne Cherry. Little Groundhog, in trouble for stealing from his friends' gardens, is taught by Squirrel to grow his very own. From seed-gathering to planting, harvesting, and eating home-grown fruits and vegetables, children join Little Groundhog in learning about the gardening process. At the end, Little Groundhog invites his animal friends to a Thanksgiving harvest feast.

Priceman, Marjorie. **How to Make an Apple Pie and See The World.** *Dragonfly Books.*

An apple pie is easy to make...if the market is open. But if the market is closed, the world becomes your grocery store. This deliciously silly recipe for apple pie takes readers around the globe to gather ingredients. First hop a steamboat to Italy for the finest semolina wheat. Then hitch a ride to England and hijack a cow for the freshest possible milk. And, oh yes! Don't forget to go apple picking in Vermont! A simple recipe for apple pie is included.

Tomecek, Steve "The Dirtmeister". **Jump Into Science – Dirt.** *National Geographic Society.*

What is soil? Who lives in dirt? How does earth help things grow? The answers are within this fun- and fact-filled picture book. Just follow the gardening star-nosed mole in the colorful outfits...and dig in!

Cooney, Barbara. **Miss Rumphius.** *The Penguin Group.*

The Lupine Lady was not always an old woman, a long time ago, she was a young girl named Alice. She loved spending time with her grandfather, an artist, and in the evenings he would tell her stories of his travels and faraway places. Alice dreamed of living by the sea and traveling to distant places, but her dear grandfather told her that there was a third thing that she must do. Alice must also make the world a more beautiful place. That is quite an undertaking for a young girl, but as she grew, she never forgot her dreams and desires. Oh, the adventures that Alice had, but now it was time for her third promise. She would find a way to make the world a more beautiful place. Quite by accident, Miss Rumphius stumbled onto her way of accomplishing her task. The people called her a crazy old lady, but that did not matter. She knew how she was going to achieve her third and most challenging promise of all. Instilling dreams and aspirations into a young child and watching them flower is a gift to everyone that they will meet. Read this book to a child and at the end, tell them that there is one last thing that they too much do - make the world a more beautiful place.

Rohmer, Harriet & Gomez, Cruz. **Mr. Sugar Came to Town.** *Children's Book Press.*

Grandma Lupe's tamales are the favorite food of all the children in town until Mr. Sugar comes riding in on his magical truck full of sweets. Suddenly the children won't eat anything but double-chocolate sundaes, raspberry cream pie, and fudge bars. Before long they're so roly-poly they can't see their feet, and their teeth are full of black holes! It falls to Grandma Lupe to unmask Mr. Sugar and to show the children why something that feels good may not be good for them. Adapted from a puppet play by the Migrant Farm Workers Outreach Program in California's Central Valley, this fanciful tale treats the themes of substance abuse and nutrition in an amusing, whimsical way.

Hall, Donald. **Ox-Cart Man.** *The Penguin Group.*

The book takes place in what looks to be the mid 19th century. A man that is never named lives on a farm with his wife, daughter, and son. The book begins with the family packing his cart with the various goods they have to sell. There are mittens knit by his daughter, shawls spun and woven by his wife, and birch brooms carved by his son. The book catalogues the items packed away in an oddly riveting fashion. Next, the man travels on foot to a harbor town named Portsmouth. There, he sells the items including his beloved ox. There's a shot of the man kissing his ox good-bye on the nose, which is simultaneously touching. He next goes out and buys an iron kettle, an embroidery needle for his daughter, a knife for his son, and two pounds of wintergreen peppermint candies. The man walks home to his family waiting for him and as the seasons pass they build up their items to sell once more. One of my favorite lines is the last one. "And geese squawked in the barnyard, dropping feathers as soft as clouds".

French, Vivian. **Oliver's Vegetables.** *Hodder Children's Books.*

On a visit to his grandparents' house, Oliver wants to eat only French fries. Grandpa tells him that he may look in the garden for potatoes, but that he must eat what he finds, whatever it may be. On the first evening, Oliver pulls up carrots and discovers that he likes them. On successive days he discovers spinach, rhubarb, cabbage, beets, and peas all of which he eats with unexpected enjoyment. On the last evening, he finds the potatoes at last and as he is sitting down to supper his mother arrives. Oh dear! Too bad! She thinks Oliver is still eating only fried potatoes. Oliver and his grandparents laugh delightedly at the irony, and so will small listeners.

Naslund, Gorel Kristina. **Our Apple Tree.** *Roaring Brook Press.*

Here's a whimsical and very useful look at the life cycle of the apple tree. With two helpful tree sprites as guides, readers travel from spring, when the apple tree blossoms, through summer, when the fruit grows, to fall and the harvest. Along the way, you'll learn about the life of the tree and the animals that visit - from insects that pollinate the flowers to deer that eat the fallen fruit.

Carle, Eric. **Pancakes, Pancakes.** *Aladdin Paperbacks.*

Here's a whimsical and very useful look at the life cycle of the apple tree. With two helpful tree sprites as guides, readers travel from spring, when the apple tree blossoms, through summer, when the fruit grows, to fall and the harvest. Along the way, you'll learn about the life of the tree and the animals that visit - from insects that pollinate the flowers to deer that eat the fallen fruit.

Titherington, Jeanne. **Pumpkin Pumpkin.** *Greenwillow Books.* .

Jamie plants a pumpkin seed in the spring and, after watching it grow all summer, carves a face in it for Halloween! But best of all, he saves some seeds that he will plant again next spring.

McKy, Katie. **Pumpkin Town.** *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.*

What happens when a town has an accidental abundance of pumpkins? What do José and his well-intentioned brothers do with a mountain of pumpkins? An EXPLOSION of pumpkins? Step into Pumpkin Town and see!

Forest, Heather. **Stone Soup.** *August House LittleFolk.*

Two hungry travelers arrive at a village expecting to find a household that will share a bit of food, as has been the custom along their journey. To their surprise, villager after villager refuses to share, each one closing the door with a bang. As they sit to rest beside a well, one of the travelers observes that if the townspeople have no food to share, they must be in greater need than we are.

Bunting, Eve. **Sunflower House.** *Harcourt Books.*

A young boy plants the seeds in a large circle. He waters them and waits patiently until they grow taller than with huge nodding blossoms that form a perfect "sunflower house." He and two friends play in the "house" all summer, even sleeping in it one night, until the leaves turn brown and the stems fall down. Then they fill their pockets with the seeds, the birds eat some, and the rest are left on the ground to grow again next summer.

Galdone, Paul. **The Little Red Hen.** *Houghton Mifflin Company.*

This classic story carries a message, not only for children that don't want to help with their chores, but for anyone who hasn't quite got into the gardening mood. This book is all about helping, sharing, and making an effort in your own behalf. I bring it along with me when doing presentations on gardening and food security, and the grown ups pick it up read it, and they really get it. Great for families and classrooms.

De Paola, Tomie. **The Popcorn Book.** *Holdiay House Inc.*

Tomie dePaola seldom fails to delight and this offering is no exception. Kids get together to pop up some pop corn and the little story of their "adventure" is quite funny. Along with the story though, we get a great mini-lesson in the history of popcorn along with some wonderful scientific facts, i.e. why does popcorn pop, how do you store popcorn, etc. It tells us how the early Native Americans cooked and used popcorn as well as those in Central America. There are dozens of lessons that can be created from this little book, great handouts and projects can be made with just a touch of creativity on the teachers part. I use this one in the class room, but it would be great for the home school folks also

Gibbons, Gail. **The Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree.** *Harcourt Books.*

This book is a must-have for any elementary teacher. I used this book in my Kindergarten class to teach the seasons and the growth of apples. My students loved the pictures and really learned the material from the story and reviewing after. I kept coming back to this book day after day to reinforce the content and my students were excited each time. One activity I did to teach the seasons was make a

"The Seasons of (students name) Apple Tree" book. There were four pages with a bare tree. At the top the students would write It is summer, It is fall, etc. Then we would look at our story and describe the picture. Then the students would add orange and red leaves for fall, etc. I love this book and would recommend it to all.

Hall, Zoe. **The Surprise Garden.** *The Blue Sky Press.*

We're planting the seeds for a surprise garden. Can you guess what we will grow?" Trace the progress of three small children (and various and sundry dogs, ladybugs, spiders, worms, and butterflies) as they loosen the soil, poke seeds in one by one, water the garden, and watch the small green shoots grow. *Surprise!* The gardeners find carrots and radishes, broccoli and cauliflower, peas, beans, squash, and even a sunflower. When it's harvest time, the children have a garden party to eat all their delicious produce.

Carle, Eric. **The Tiny Seed.** *Children's Publishing Division.*

This picture book admirably conveys the miracle of a seed. Flower pods burst and dispatch their seeds on the wind; the air-borne seeds are subject to myriad disasters; and the ones that make it through the perils of the seasons to become mature flowering plants are still susceptible to being picked, trod upon and otherwise damaged. But nature allows for survivors, and so the tiny seed grows into a giant flower, releasing its seeds and continuing the cycle. As he has demonstrated with *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and other books, Carle has an extraordinary kinship with nature. Here we have not just the explanation of the life of a flower, but drama, lessons of life and a lovely spirituality.

Lin, Grace. **The Ugly Vegetables.** *Charlesbridge Publishing.*

The neighbor's gardens look so much prettier and so much more inviting to the young gardener than the garden of black-purple-green vines, fuzzy wrinkled leaves, prickly stems, and a few little yellow flowers that she and her mother grow. Nevertheless, mother assures her that these are better than flowers. Come harvest time, everyone agrees as those ugly Chinese vegetables become the tastiest, most aromatic soup they have ever known. As the neighborhood comes together to share flowers and ugly vegetable soup, the young gardener learns that regardless of appearances, everything has its own beauty and purpose.

Stevens, Janet. **Tops & Bottoms.** *Harcourt Books.*

Hare solves his family's problems by tricking rich and lazy Bear in this funny, energetic version of an old slave story. With roots in American slave tales, *Tops & Bottoms* celebrates the trickster tradition of using one's wits to overcome hardship. "As usual, Stevens' animal characters, bold and colorful, are delightful. . . It's all wonderful fun, and the book opens, fittingly, from top to bottom instead of from side to side, making it perfect for story-time sharing."

Hoberman, Mary Ann. **Whose Garden Is It.** *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.*

The gardener says the garden belongs to him. But the woodchuck insists that it's his. And so do the rabbit, the butterfly, the squash bug, and the bumblebee. Even the tiny seeds and whistling weeds think the garden just couldn't grow without them. As they stroll through the exquisite plants and flowers, Mrs. McGee and her child listen and wonder: *Whose garden is it?*