2016

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Recommended Citation

Huss, Jeanine and Spencer, Roxanne Myers (2016) "Wandering the Web--Libraries Gardening with Kids? A Growing Trend," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 28: Iss. 5, Article 43.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7540>

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Wandering the Web — Libraries Gardening with Kids? A Growing Trend

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Column Editor's Note: Public and school library gardens are a growing movement in rural, suburban, and urban communities. The opportunity to engage library patrons of all ages in developing a garden or healthy eating project is one that fulfills a powerful library mission to serve their populations.

A 2014 article in *School Library Journal* — <http://www.slj.com/2014/08/programs/dig-it-libraries-are-creating-gardens-to-expand-their-mission> — highlights the roles libraries can play in building school or community gardens. Public and school libraries can be great places to offer local communities gardening literature, and, increasingly, programs and space devoted to gardening. Libraries are uniquely able to connect environmental, sustainability, and nutritional literacy to garden activities. Some public libraries either have, or are creating, space to allow children or teens to grow gardens. Some libraries have little or no access to outdoor space for gardening. Containers or tank gardening provide alternatives when space is limited. Sustainability of the garden space, indoor or outdoor, is key; ongoing library programming for children, teens, and adults to maintain the gardens can build lasting relationships within the community. Small grants or donations of gardening tools may be possible from local nurseries or big-box home improvement stores. Local horticultural societies and cooperative extension offices with master gardeners are two groups that can help provide additional expertise in designing and maintain sustainable gardens with local plants.

Following are some lively and informative online and print resources for school and library gardening with children. — **JM**

Selected Gardening Websites

Education Outside — www.educationoutside.org/how-grow-school-garden — is a site that promotes science in the classroom through school gardens. Based on the 2010 book, *How to Grow a School Garden: A Complete Guide for Parents and Teachers*, this site offers essential steps on finding an appropriate garden site through cooking from the garden produce. Librarians, teachers, and community members can glean expert tips to create their own gardens.

Readers to Eaters — www.readerstoeters.com/our-story/ — is a website that promotes food literacy. They include books they have published, a blog, and pop-up bookstores where they sell their books at farmers' markets, harvest festivals, and conferences. Programs they support include "One-City Read programs and Book-n-Talk series with authors, chefs, farmers, and children's garden educators." They provide education on food literacy by partnering with community organizations. They also have ideas for how to use their books in lessons.

National Agriculture in the Classroom — www.agclassroom.org/teacher/ — offers ideas for connecting gardening with agriculture literacy. The site provides a list of grants and scholarships for classroom teachers. A broad range of curricular ideas for K-12 students is also included, as well as great ideas for connecting agricultural science to science fair or buddy project topics. Other fun features of this site are information on state agricultural facts and downloadable screen-savers.

Edutopia's "Five-Minute Film Festival: School Gardens" (2012) — www.edutopia.org/blog/film-festival-school-gardens — provides links to general information and almost a dozen short videos on building school gardens, including the remarkable Green Bronx Machine. Tips and techniques on healthy eating, sustainability, and thriving in urban environments will inspire students and teachers to plan for their own school gardens.

Slow Food USA National School Garden Program — gardens.slowfoodusa.org/ — provides resources and ideas for implementing school gardens to encourage healthier eating. The program also has a global focus, with an e-pen pal program to connect classrooms around the world as a cultural exchange and to share ideas on growing school gardens.

Real School Gardens — www.realschoolgardens.org — develops, teaches, trains schools and teachers to build school gardens as learning laboratories for their students. Their one-day programs teach volunteers in low-income elementary schools how to build a sustainable garden. The Real School Gardens project works with teachers to improve student academic progress and engagement. As of this writing, Real School Gardens has helped create more than 100 school gardens!

National Farm to School Network — <http://www.farmtoschool.org/> — With the *Farm to School Act of 2015* (<https://www.congress.gov/bills/114/congress/senate/bills/569>), the momentum for connecting local farmers with fresh produce to local schools has blossomed, strengthening bonds within communities. Programs include providing healthier cafeteria alternatives through locally grown foods, grants for educators, and engaging students with school gardens.

Composting for Kids — aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/kindergarden/kidscompost/cover.html — is a simple slide show (can be downloaded also as a PDF) showing how to compost and enrich soil to grow a garden. An animated tutorial (www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRXNo7Ieky8) for young people, from **Highfields Center for Composting** — <http://www.highfieldscomposting.org/> — instructs students on the value and need for composting for gardens and conservation of the environment.

Seed Savers — www.seedsavers.org/ — preserves and exchanges heritage seeds in an effort to conserve endangered plants and trees. At Heritage Farm, plants are grown to replenish the supply and seeds are protected in an underground freezer vault. The information on heirloom seeds, open-pollination, and bio-diversity are important ecological lessons for students. Gardeners can save and exchange seeds through Seed Savers to maintain and spread the viability of native trees and plants.

Gardening Know How — <http://www.gardeningknowhow.com/> — is a general informational site for gardeners with a good deal of information, such as a glossary of gardening terms, a blog, an app, and a form to send in gardening questions. Do a site search for "children" and find several articles on designing a garden, fun plants to grow, vegetable gardens, and composting.

National Gardening Association — <http://www.garden.org/> — and **Kids Gardening** — <http://www.kidsgardening.org/> — have great resources for adults and children. Kids Gardening offers several ideas for books an educator can use for gardening with children. Many lesson plans on the site offer ideas of types of gardens to plant, how to be a bee, and teaching students on soil. Information on how to design different types of gardens and garden basics is also found on this Website. The **National Garden Association** is aimed more towards adults but also offers a learning garden online course. "How to" videos and podcasts might appeal for those who prefer listening or watching to learn more about gardening. An unique aspect of this site is the community ideas area where people post new ideas daily about gardening.

Rodale's Organic Life — www.rodaleorganiclife.com/home/the-importance-of-getting-kids-into-the-garden — Here is an article from the natural living website from Rodale, with great ideas for gardening with younger kids. There are 13 great hints at how to start a garden and not make it too large to be unmanageable. Hints include: plant seeds in

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fun designs instead of rows and work on weeds after the soil is moist from a rain. A list of flowers, vegetables, herbs, and fruits is given to provide insight at what grows quickly and interests young minds.

Teaching in Nature's Classroom — www.teachinginnaturesclassroom.org — Download a free eBook based on research which describes 15 principles of garden-based education. This site also has a garden-based learning online forum to help with any questions educators have about gardening. This site wants to help the garden-based learning increase.

Parenting — <http://www.parenting.com/> — Search this general parenting Website for "gardening with kids" and many articles come up with great ideas on gardening with children. One even includes a humorous look at gardening "How to garden with children in 53 easy steps" which shows examples of what not to do! The "10 inspired gardening projects for kids" has great garden projects, with photos, that you can do easily with children (and which do not require expensive materials!).

Growing Minds — growing-minds.org/garden-lesson-plans/ — More than 500 books on gardening are discussed on this site. Teachers or librarians can view the book titles and lesson plans by grade level (preschool through fifth grade) and subject area. A fun aspect of this website is the inclusion of recipes that are healthy and (hopefully!) grown from your local school or library garden!

Collective School Garden Network — www.csgn.org/curriculum — Although this Website is primarily for California and Arizona, there is helpful information in "Steps to a school garden," which would apply to any geographic setting. This includes links to a weed photo gallery, ideas on watering the garden, controlling pests, and summer care.

Edible Schoolyard — edibleschoolyard.org/ — Edible Schoolyard wants to share their curricula with K-12 educators. This site allows teachers to search based on subject, grade level, and season. It also provides project ideas based on the type of program, such as kitchen, business, garden, and farm-based environments.

Selected Books on Gardening with Children

How to Grow a School Garden: A Complete Guide for Parents and Teachers by **Arden Bucklin-Sporer** and **Rachel Kathleen Pringle** — This book provides a thorough and detailed explanation of how to create the blue print of the garden, prepare the site, work with parents and schools, including teaching in the garden and cooking in the garden. It has sample lesson plans for K-8th graders and includes ideas on making the garden sustainable.

Gardening Lab for Kids: 52 Fun Experiments to Learn, Grow, Harvest, Make, and Enjoy Your Garden (Lab Series) by **Renata Fossen Brown** — Focusing on a variety of topics such as botany, ecology, the seasons, food, patience, insects, eating and cooking, this book has ideas for weekly lessons that can be used as individual projects or separate experiences. This book works well for teachers, librarians, and community groups.

Roots, Shoots, Buckets, and Boots: Gardening Together with Children by **Sharon Lovejoy** — Themed gardens will engage children's imagination, which is great for those who want to add a creative twist to a garden. How about a Zuni waffle garden or Mother Nature's Medicine Chest for garden themes? The watercolor illustrations add delight for the reader and might encourage young readers to get into the action of planning a garden!

Project Garden: A Month-by-Month Guide to Planting, Growing, and Enjoying ALL Your Backyard Has to Offer by **Stacy Tornio** — Garden throughout the year! This book has ideas of things to plant, what to eat, how to recycle and things to make all based on garden items. There are great ideas on what to plant and how to incorporate your garden items into delicious recipes!

The Garden Classroom: Hands-on Activities in Math, Science, Literacy, and Art by **Cathy James** — Including a garden journal is a good way to incorporate both science and writing into garden learning. The book includes ideas on organizing the garden classroom by thinking about the space, clothing, and shelter an educator might need in order to successfully garden with children. 🌱