

Using Garden Books as Windows and Mirrors

Overview: A “window” allows us to see out into the world – an external perspective different from what we are familiar with. “Mirrors” reflect back our own truths and identities. When we read books that act as “windows” and “mirrors” with kids, it can help them cultivate acceptance, understanding, and compassion, as well as reaffirm their unique culture, traditions, and backgrounds. This activity shares a list of recommended books related to gardening with kids and how to use them as a tool for encouraging inclusivity and celebrating our differences as well as what we have in common.



Materials:

- Age-appropriate children’s book related to gardening or food (see list below for recommendations)

Approximate Time to Complete: 30 minutes

Location: Indoor or Outdoor

Ages: Pre – 8th grade

Season: All seasons

Instructions

1. Choose a garden or food focused book that can serve as a “window” or “mirror” for the kids who will be reading it.
2. Read the book in advance. If the book does not include any, write a list of pre-reading questions that encourage kids to think about the story in the context of culture, belonging, and celebrating diversity.
3. As an opener to pique their interest, show the kids the cover and ask them what they think the book will be about. Listen to their guesses but do not give away the story!
4. If you will be reading the book out loud with younger children, take time to pause during the reading to engage them. For example, ask questions about pictures, what they recognize from the garden, or what they think will happen.
5. If older kids will be reading a longer/chapter book on their own, give them questions beforehand to respond to as written reflections.
6. For any age group, facilitate a post-reading group discussion. You can ask questions such as:
 - a. Can you relate to what happened in the story? Would you like to share about your experience?
 - b. What did the main character learn?
 - c. What is something new you learned?
 - d. What are things that you were familiar with?
 - e. Did the book change your mind about something you believed before you read it?
7. Continue to read a diverse range of books with your youth gardeners. Incorporate what you learn with what you do in the

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garden, and facilitate discussions that allow them to take pride in their identities and embrace those of their peers.

8. Provide kids with a list of “window” and “mirror” books that they can read on their own or with their families and encourage them to explore and learn about different languages, foods, and cultures.

Recommended Gardening Books for Kids:

Pre-K & Kindergarten

- [Green Green: A Community Gardening Story by Marie Lamba](#)
- [Lola Plants A Garden by Anna McQuinn](#)
- [Little Seeds \(My Little Planet\) by Charles Ghigna](#)
- [Bea's Bees by Katherine Pryor](#)
- [Errol's Garden by Gillian Hibbs](#)
- [Flower Garden by Eve Bunting](#)

Elementary

- [Flower Garden by Eve Bunting](#)
- [What's In The Garden? by Marianne Berkes](#)
- [Grandma Lena's Big Ol' Turnip by Denia Lewis Hester](#)
- [City Green by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan](#)
- [The Ugly Vegetables by Grace Lin](#)
- [Plant A Little Seed by Bonnie Chistensen](#)
- [Plants Feed Me by Lizzy Rockwell](#)
- [How a Seed Grows by Helene J. Jordan](#)
- [Our Community Garden by Barbara Pollak](#)
- [The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families by Susan L. Roth](#)
- [Seed Magic by Jane Buchanan](#)
- [Planting the Trees of Kenya by Claire Nivola](#)
- [Two Old Potatoes and Me by John Coy](#)
- [In the Garden with Dr. Carver by Susan Grigsby](#)
- Watercress, Andrea Wang, illustrated by Jason Chin

Middle School

- [SeedFolks by Paul Fleischman](#)

Bilingual

- [At The Farmers Market / En El Mercado \(Spanish and English\) By Anna W. Bardaus](#)
- [That's Not Fair! Emma Tenayuca's Struggle For Justice / ¡No Es Justo! La Lucha De Emma Tenayuca Por La Justicia by Carmen Tafolla](#)
- [Celebrate My Hopi Corn by Anita Poleahia](#)
- [The Apple Tree \(English and Cherokee\) by Sandy Tharp-Thee, Marlen](#)

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Coloring

- [Black in the Garden Coloring Book by Colah Tawkin](#)

For additional ideas of recommended garden books related to racial and cultural diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, check out the following resources:

- [31 Antiracist Books For Kids And Teens by FoodCorps](#)
- [25 Books To Deepen Our Commitment To Racial Justice by FoodCorps](#)
- [Multicultural Collection of Farm to ECE Books by Ready Set Grow](#)
- [16 Children's Books Celebrating Food by FoodTank](#)
- [Children's Books about Diversity and Food by Happy Kids Kitchen](#)

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