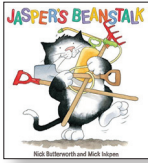


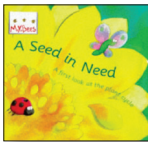
Book corner



Jasper's Beanstalk

By Nick Butterworth and Mick Inkpen

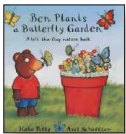
Jasper plants a bean and spends the next seven days impatiently waiting for it to grow. How long will he have to wait before he can start looking for giants?



A Seed in Need

By Sam Godwin

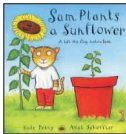
An inquisitive ladybird and snail follow the growth of a plant from seed to full flowering.



Ben Plants a Butterfly Garden

By Kate Petty and Axel Scheffler

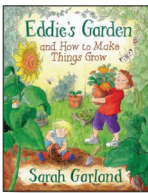
Ben finds out all about how flowers and butterflies grow, and you can learn how to grow a butterfly garden of your own.



Sam Plants a Sunflower

By Kate Petty and Axel Scheffler

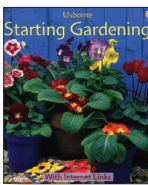
Another book about planting and growing, but this time showing what is happening to the plant underground.



Eddie's Garden and How to Make Things Grow

By Sarah Garland

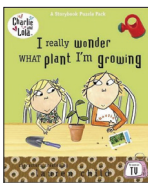
Story about a little boy who sets up his own plot, with a information section about growing and container and indoor gardening.



Starting Gardening

By Cheryl Evans and Sue Johnson

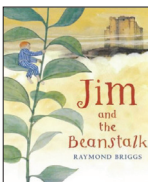
Through step-by-step instructions and a range of projects and activities, children will learn how to grow and care for a variety of plants. Includes Usborne's internet links.



Charlie and Lola: I Really Wonder What Plant I'm Growing

By Lauren Child

Little sister Lola plants a seed. 'What will my seed grow into, Charlie?', she asks. 'I don't know, Lola. We'll just have to wait and see!' comes the reply.



Jim and the Beanstalk

By Raymond Briggs

Jim finds a beanstalk growing outside his window one morning, and follows his famous predecessor up to the top... A retelling of the classic tale story and now a classic in its own right.



Spot in the Garden

By Eric Hill

Spot is out in the garden, helping to weed the flower beds and water the plants. Characteristically simple text and illustrations.

Nature watch

Being in the city doesn't mean children can't learn about the natural world. *Marianne Sargent* looks at one nursery connecting urban with earth

Marianne McGregor, deputy manager of Townmead Community Nursery in Fulham, strongly believes that living in the city should not prevent children from getting closer to nature and learning about life cycles.

'We are situated on an estate and there are a few patches of grass out front, but most people are living in flats without gardens,' explains Ms McGregor.

She says a lack of space in an urban environment has not deterred the staff at Townmead from getting the children involved in a growing project, however.

'It was getting back to basics and helping the children to experience the role they could play in the natural world, which I think is important for children who live in the city. They might have parks but they are not exactly surrounded by nature.

'We wanted to bring nature into the city because it is a great idea to go out and visit a farm, but a lot of the children are only here for three hours in the morning or afternoon and travelling so far out is

not possible. This project was nice because it was a unique experience for some of the children.'

Townmead is one of 36 community nurseries across London that comprise Britain's largest childcare social enterprise, the London Early Years Foundation. The aim of the foundation is to provide high-quality early education for underprivileged children by offering subsidised childcare to families from all backgrounds, who may otherwise be unable to afford nursery education.

FRESH PRODUCE

Ms McGregor explains the value of such a project for children who have only ever seen fresh produce on the supermarket shelf. 'Projects like this are good for the children because if they're not exposed to this kind of idea they might think that all food comes pre-packaged. This shows them there is much more to it than that.

'The children were able to see how they could be involved in planting the seeds and nourishing and taking care of the plants until they grew.'

The children grew herbs, salad





A growing project led on to one looking at the life cycle of caterpillars

vegetables and flowers from seed both indoors in pots and in a small planting area outside. Then they had the chance to taste their produce.

‘We made cress sandwiches and the children tasted lettuce and spinach. It was interesting because the children who don’t usually eat salad were actually tasting it because they were curious after taking part in growing it.’

‘We gave packs of salad to the parents for them to take home and eat with their families and this gave the children a sense of pride in that they had helped produce something that their family was eating.’

Parents and carers were also invited into the nursery to plant with their children. ‘It was a chance for them to come along and be involved in something they don’t normally do,’ says Ms McGregor. The parents were given the chance to take the potted plants home and continue to grow them indoors with their children.

NATURAL PROGRESSION

The project led on to learning about life cycles. ‘It was a natural progression because you’re planting the seeds, watching them grow, eating the plants and then when they die you compost them,’ Ms McGregor explains.

‘This led to thinking about other life cycles like that of a caterpillar, so we did a topic on that. We had caterpillars growing in the classroom that the children fed and watched. When they turned into butterflies we took them out into the garden and said goodbye to them and let them go.’

Ms McGregor says the project has given Townmead Nursery the appetite for more adventurous growing projects next year.

She says, ‘We grew mostly salad vegetables this time, but we are planning on growing things like carrots and other root vegetables next and we’ll be cooking those up.’ ■

● www.leyf.org.uk

ACTIVITIES

Go for growth

GROW A SMALL-WORLD SCENE

Get the children involved in creating a living small-world scene. Cress is very easy and quick to grow indoors. So, line a large shallow tray with compost and scatter cress seeds thickly all over it. Place the tray in a sunny position, water the seeds and keep an eye on them regularly to ensure they don’t dry out.

When you have a thick layer of cress, use a knife to cut out roadways. Then create a small-world village or town by filling the roads with gravel and placing cars on them, putting small animals in cress fields, setting up houses with people sitting on cress lawns and building a mini playground with children running in cress gardens.

OUTDOOR POTTING SHEDS

Supply a range of different sized plant pots, seed trays, gardening tools, compost and seeds for the children to experiment and play with independently. Help the children write their names on lolly sticks, to put in pots they have planted seeds in, and set up a growing area where they can leave their plants to grow.

INDOOR ROLE-PLAY GARDEN CENTRE

Provide a range of gardening tools and equipment and some fake flowers and plants for the children to use in a role-play garden centre. Set up a table with a till, phone, receipt book and price lists. Give the children overalls, aprons and badges with job roles such as gardener, shop assistant and cashier.

Extend the role play to include a farm shop and provide either toy or fresh fruit and vegetables, paper bags, weighing scales, price labels, a till, money and reusable shopping bags.

THE TINY SEED

Share *The Tiny Seed* by Eric Carle with the children. Photocopy and laminate the pictures to create a sequencing activity. Challenge the children to remember what happened to the seed while arranging the pictures into the correct order.

GARDENING MATHEMATICS

Count the leaves on beanstalks or petals on flowers, share out beans, create patterns with seeds, measure the height of sunflowers, sort plant pots according to shapes and sizes and arrange plants in order of height.

RESOURCES

- *Mr Bloom’s Nursery*, BBC series website, with games and songs, www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/mr-blooms-nursery
- ‘Real’ child-sized garden tools, www.cosydirect.com
- Nature life cycles carpet, www.earlyyearsresources.co.uk
- Stories, rhymes, recipes and more on a gardening theme, www.muddyhands.info
- Veg Patch Match memory game, www.orchardtoys.com
- *The Little Book of Growing Things* by Sally Featherstone
- *The Edible Balcony: growing fresh produce in the heart of the city* by Alex Mitchell
- *Gardening Projects for Kids* by Jenny Hendy
- *Patio Produce* by Paul Peacock

