

Parent Resources

The information contained in this section is intended to help you as a school leader educate parents, caregivers and community members about your American Heart Association Teaching Garden and suggest ways they can help reinforce what students are learning at school outside of the school day. Repurpose and tailor the content in this section however you most effectively communicate with your school community (website, email, monthly newsletter, send-home folders, etc.). In this section we've included:

- A sample letter to send home with students letting their parents and caregivers know about the American Heart Association Teaching Gardens
- Ideas for promoting fruits and vegetables at home
- An at-home goal setting template
- At-home gardening tips and activities
- Seasonal/Monthly Recipes
- And more!



Written for the American Heart Association by Whitney Cohen, Life Lab Science Program.

American Heart Association

TEACHING GARDENS



My Heart. My Life.™

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We have exciting news! Our school has been selected to participate in the American Heart Association's Teaching Gardens program. The program uses a school garden to teach students about nutrition and inspire them to eat more fruits and vegetables.

As many of you know, today's young people are facing a national health crisis. One in three children is overweight or obese, and only one in 10 consumes the amount of daily servings of fruits and vegetables recommended to maintain good health. With Teaching Gardens, our goal is to change that.

Don't be surprised if your kids come home asking for broccoli, beets or sugar snap peas! Kids who grow and cook fresh produce tend to love it. In Teaching Gardens, our students will have the opportunity to plant, grow, harvest and prepare delicious fresh fruits and vegetables. The American Heart Association Teaching Gardens lessons focus on teaching new nutrition concepts; helping students understand where their food comes from; and providing students with positive experiences with fresh fruits and vegetables. Numerous studies have shown that students involved in gardening develop positive attitudes toward fruits and vegetables.

Teaching Gardens will be a tremendous teaching tool, not only for encouraging healthy eating, but also for improving student learning in core content areas. In the garden, students will observe natural cycles, graph favorite foods, write about their experiences and prepare foods from different cultures. The garden will provide an engaging, hands-on context for students to practice the science, math, language arts and social studies concepts they're working on in class.

No one is more important in teaching kids about food than their parents and guardians. Therefore, we sincerely hope that you will reinforce this work at home. With just a small space — at your home or in a community garden — and a few minutes each week, you can engage kids in simple garden and cooking activities. We will provide you with monthly newsletters highlighting seasonal activity ideas, recipes and tips for gardening, cooking and learning about nutrition at home.

Working together, we will have a positive influence on the eating habits — and therefore the future health — of all of our students.

So let's raise a glass of carrot juice and toast to the health of our students!

Tips and Strategies for Parents and Caregivers to Promote Fruits and Vegetables in the Home

Set Out Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for Snacking

- Stock your fridge with raw fruit and vegetables, cleaned and cut into finger-food slices. Store them at kids' eye level in an easy-to-reach spot. You can save time by buying pre-washed and cut vegetables. If your child is uninterested, add a favorite dip.
- If your kids are hungry while you're making dinner, put out a plate of raw vegetables or fruit, such as carrot and cucumber sticks or apple slices. Or, if you're chopping vegetables for a dish you're making, let them sample the raw veggies you're preparing. They'll satisfy their hunger and enjoy an extra serving of vegetables when they're most receptive.

Involve Your Kids in Selecting and Preparing Fruits and Vegetables

- Involve your children in selecting fruits and vegetables at the farmers market or grocery store. Give them the grocery list and have them find each fruit or vegetable. The more involved they are in every step of acquiring and preparing food, the more likely they are to eat and enjoy it.
- Offer older kids the opportunity to choose fruits and vegetables to add to the grocery list, or even choose healthy recipes and write grocery lists themselves.
- Place a chair or stool at your kitchen counter to make young children feel welcome to participate in food preparation. Offer age-appropriate tasks to eager participants, such as tearing up spinach leaves or pushing the buttons on the blender for youngsters, or helping measure and chop ingredients for older children.

Offer Fruits or Vegetables with Every Meal

- Be sure to offer at least one fruit or vegetable at every meal or snack. Don't be discouraged if your children don't eat the fruit or vegetable you offer. It may take many times of seeing an item on their plates before they decide to taste it, and many times tasting it before they like it.
- Start your day with fruit. Add berries to cereal or bananas to peanut butter toast.

- Add thin slices of fruits or vegetables to sandwiches. Apples, pears, peppers, cucumbers, sprouts, tomatoes and pineapple work well.
- Grate or chop vegetables, such as carrots, spinach or zucchini, and add to enchiladas, meat loaf, lasagna, pasta sauce, chili, soups or other mixed dishes.
- Add peas to macaroni and cheese.
- Add extra vegetables to ready-to-eat soups.
- When ordering or making pizza, include at least three vegetable toppings.
- Include one healthy dish that you know your child will enjoy with every meal. Simple choices, such as applesauce or a slice of whole-grain bread, are fine.

Garden Together

- Start a home garden and involve your children in every step of growing and harvesting food there. If you're low on space, you can garden in a container on a stoop or get a plot in a community garden. To find a community garden near you, visit www.communitygarden.org. Children often feel proud of what they collect in their harvest basket, making them more likely to want to help prepare and eat the produce.
- Include in your garden things that are easy for children to pick and eat from the plants, such as edible-pod peas, green beans, cherry tomatoes, lemon cucumbers or berries. Children will often eat from the plant that they have not shown interest in before.
- If you have space, include some just-for-fun elements in your garden, such as giant sunflowers and pumpkins.

Try New Fruits and Vegetables Regularly as a Family

- Let your kids see you try new fruits and vegetables.
- Become aware of times your children are extra hungry and may be open to trying new things. One mom reports that her child will eat anything in the car on the way home from school. For example, she has eaten whole peppers, figs, cucumbers and whole bags of green beans and peas. Other parents have found that their children are open to trying new fruits and vegetables on outings, such as a day at the beach or a camping trip, or when they're eating with groups of friends who are all enjoying the new item.

Visit Local Farms or Farmers Markets

- Explore your local farmers market with your child. Let your child help pick out fresh fruits or vegetables to snack on, help pay the farmer and carry the bag. Much of what you buy may disappear before you get back to the car!
- At the farmers markets, you may be able to buy fruit in large quantities (a whole flat of strawberries, for example) for low prices, especially at the end of the day. You can chop and freeze the fruit to use later in smoothies, jams or with yogurt.
- Visit a local you-pick farm to enjoy fruit together and stock up your freezer.

Eat Whole Grains

- When purchasing grain products, such as rice, pasta or bread, look for whole grain options. For packaged foods, the word “whole” should be listed with the first ingredient.
- If you normally use white flour in your baking, invest in some finely ground whole-wheat flour, and gradually start substituting it for the white flour. Start by replacing just one-fourth of your flour with whole wheat. Over time, increase the ratio of whole-wheat flour until you can eliminate white flour altogether. Your family’s taste buds can gradually adjust until they accept whole-wheat flour in everything from pizza crusts to cookies.

Present Healthy Foods in a Kid-Friendly Way

- Consider creative presentations for healthy foods. For example, cut sandwiches with cookie cutters; use an ice cream scooper to serve brown rice or mashed potatoes; use raisins or small pieces of fruits or vegetables, to make faces on crackers, rice, potatoes, or other healthy foods.

Enjoy Fruits and Vegetables in Front of Your Kids

- Model enjoyment of fruits and vegetables at every opportunity. There is no better way to teach your kids to eat healthy foods than by letting them watch you enjoy healthy foods.

Recommended Reading:

Child of Mine: Feeding With Love and Good Sense, by Ellyn Satter

Healthiest Kid in the Neighborhood, by William and Martha Sears

Feeding the Whole Family: Recipes for Babies, Young Children, and their Parents,
by Cynthia Lair

Ideas for Quick and Easy Snacks Featuring Fruits and Vegetables

- Celery sticks and peanut or almond butter
- Apple slices and peanut or almond butter
- Carrots and hummus
- Pepper boats: Cut a pepper into big chunks, spread hummus or bean dip on the inside, and allow your child to decorate with other veggies or seeds
- Tortilla with hummus and veggies, rolled up
- Thinly sliced turkey, cream cheese and sliced veggies, rolled up
- Homemade trail mix with unsalted nuts and no-sugar-added dried fruits
- Purple yogurt: frozen blueberries mixed with plain yogurt
- A whole apple, pear, persimmon, plum, peach, nectarine, orange, tangerine or other hand-held fruit

Ideas for Healthy and Easy Lunches for School

- Wraps: Wrap up a dip, a protein and some veggies in a whole-wheat tortilla. Possibilities include:
 - Dips: mashed beans, hummus, low-fat or fat-free cream cheese
 - Protein: turkey, chicken breast, baked tofu
 - Veggies: avocado, carrot, cucumber or pepper sticks
- Turkey sandwich on whole-wheat bread with lettuce, tomato and avocado
- Cold Asian noodle salad: noodles, veggies, sliced chicken breast and an Asian dressing such as sesame vinaigrette
- Brown rice and beans with avocado and salsa (make enough for a few days or use leftovers from last night's dinner)
- Fruits to go: oranges, tangerines, plums, sliced apples, sliced nectarine, melon cubes, sliced kiwi, dates, sliced pear, strawberries
- Veggies to go: sugar snap peas, sliced cucumber, cherry tomatoes, celery sticks, carrot sticks, roasted potatoes, roasted carrots, roasted sweet potato, blanched broccoli, steamed green beans

Tips:

- Packaging makes a big difference. Choose a lunch bag or box that your kids really like. Asian markets often have wonderful lunch containers with compartments. Even a quick doodle on a recyclable paper bag can make a difference in your child's perception of the food inside.
- On days when you feel like adding something extra, include a hidden surprise, such as a seashell, sticker, flower, rock, cartoon or a note from you.

Fun Healthy Eating Challenges for the Whole Family

Try these challenges as a whole family to encourage healthy eating:

- Six-Plant Part Meal: Try to get all six plant parts — root, stem, leaf, flower, fruit and seed — into one meal.
- Rainbow Meal: Try to get all of the colors of the rainbow from fruits or vegetables into one meal.
- Have each family member choose, prepare and serve one fruit or vegetable that no one in your family has tried before.
- Put out the meal components and see who can make the most beautiful plate of food.
- Fill half your plate with fruits and veggies.
- Try a new fruit or vegetable every week. Track favorites.

Common Fruits and Vegetables Categorized by Color

(Helpful for a Rainbow Meal Challenge)

Adding color to a meal can boost the nutrients offered on your plate. Typically, color is a good cue of the amount of nutrients in a food (nutritional density). And usually the darker the natural color of a food, the better. Ever color can provide something different, so strive for variety!

Red	Yellow/Light Orange
<p>Normally high in health-promoting lycopene and anthocyanins (the darker the tones typically the more of these nutrients).</p> <p>Antioxidants that may improve heart-health, and lower risk of some cancers.</p> <p><i>Examples: apples, tomatoes, strawberries, watermelons, beets, cherries, cranberries, red pepper</i></p>	<p>Tend to be high in antioxidants, such as vitamin C and beta carotene (vitamin A)</p> <p>Nutrients can contribute to a strong immune system, strong vision, healthy skin and heart-health.</p> <p><i>Examples: oranges, grapefruit, corn, yellow peppers, yellow apples, mango, apricot, squash, carrots, sweet potatoes</i></p>
Blue/Purple	Green
<p>Dark-colored fruits and vegetables are usually good sources of anthocyanins.</p> <p>May help with heart-health and prevention of some cancers (from anti-oxidants).</p> <p><i>Examples: Purple grapes, raisins, purple cabbage, eggplant, plums, blueberries, blackberries, purple potatoes</i></p>	<p>Green is a signal for chlorophyll, and green vegetables are full of folate and such phytonutrients as carotenoids. Darker, leafy greens (like spinach and kale) tend to have more of these nutrients.</p> <p>Can help brain-health, good vision, and promote growth and healthy pregnancy. High fiber for healthy intestinal tract and lower cholesterol.</p> <p><i>Examples: Leafy greens, broccoli, cabbage, lettuce, avocado, kiwi, asparagus, zucchini, peas</i></p>

Healthy Eating Habits Quiz

Do we...

- Have fresh fruits and veggies cleaned, cut and ready in an easy-to-reach location, such as a bowl on the counter or a shelf in the fridge?
- Try new fruits and vegetables regularly?
- Grow our own fruits and vegetables with our kids?
- Visit farmers markets and local farms with our kids?
- Involve our kids in selecting and preparing fruits and vegetables?
- Offer fruits and vegetables with every meal or as a snack?
- Enjoy fruits and vegetables in front of our kids?
- Make sure that at least half the grains we eat are whole grains?
- Use our imaginations to present healthy foods in a kid-friendly way?

Goal-Setting Template

If you answered yes to any of the questions in the quiz above, congratulate yourself on the work you're doing! If you answered no to any of the questions above, consider how you might make a change. Use the chart below to set goals for you and your family.

Topic	Goal	Check here how many times you did this in a week
Set out fresh fruits and veggies for snacking.	<i>Example: I want to put a bowl of baby carrots or sugar snap peas in the front of the fridge at kids' eye level every day.</i>	✓✓✓
Set out fresh fruits and veggies for snacking.		
Try new fruits and veggies as a family.		
Grow fruits and veggies.		
Visit farms or farmers markets.		
Involve my kids in selecting and preparing fruits and veggies.		
Offer fruits and vegetables with every meal and snack.		
Enjoy fruits and vegetables in front of my kids.		
Eat whole grains.		
Present food in a kid-friendly way.		

Food Log Template

http://www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/worksheets/worksheet_2000_18.pdf

Sticker chart for families to record new fruits and vegetables tried

	Times Tried									
New Fruit or Vegetable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

January

Family Garden Activity: Making a Worm Bin

Worms are some of a gardener's best friends. These amazing little creatures can take food scraps and turn them into nutrient-rich soil for plants. If you want to start recycling your fruit and vegetable scraps, you and your kids can make a worm bin in your own home. All you need is a Rubbermaid tote, hammer, nail or drill and newspaper. To learn how, visit: www.lifelab.org/2009/12/worm-composting/.

Seasonal Recipe: High Energy Trail Mix

Nuts and dried fruits are packed with energy to keep you going throughout the day. You and your kids can mix some of your favorites to make a trail mix, which makes a great snack. Any combination works well, so try different variations. Nuts and dried fruit are energy dense, packed with a lot of calories in a small serving. So munch in moderation and be aware of your portion sizes. Here's a sample recipe:

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup unsalted, unroasted walnuts
- ¼ cup unsalted, unroasted almonds
- ¼ cup unsalted, unroasted cashews
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- ¼ cup dried apricots
- ¼ cup raisins

Steps:

1. Heat oven to 350°.
2. Place all of the nuts in a single layer on a baking sheet and cook for 15 minutes.
3. Chop apricots into bite-sized pieces.
4. Mix toasted nuts with dried fruit and serve.

Note: To simplify this recipe, you can buy already-toasted nuts. For extra fun, you can buy walnuts in the shell and crack them with your kids.

Nutrition Tip:

If your kids are hungry while you're making dinner, put out a plate of raw veggies or fruit, such as carrot and cucumber sticks or apple slices. Or, if you're chopping vegetables for a dish you're making, let them sample the raw veggies. They satisfy their hunger and enjoy an extra serving of vegetables when they're most receptive to it.

Storybooks:

These are wonderful stories to read as you and your family delve into gardening and cooking together:

How Groundhog's Garden Grew, by Lynne Cherry

The Surprise Garden, by Zoe Hall

A Place to Grow, by Stephanie Bloom and Kelly Murphy

Flip, Float, Fly: Seeds on the Move, by JoAnn Early Macken

Winter Gardening Tips:

- **Garden Planning:** Cold, dark winter days are an ideal time to start planning your spring garden. Head to a local garden center or go online to order a free seed catalog. Then, together with your kids, take time to browse through the possibilities. Once you've chosen plants to grow, you can use the information from the catalog or the back of your seed packets to figure out when each plant needs to be planted. From there, you can make a planting calendar that will guide you through the spring.
- **Building:** When the weather permits, winter is also a nice time to dive into infrastructure projects for your garden, such as building a planter box. Planter boxes and pots provide a great way to garden in small spaces, such as on rooftops, stoops or indoors. You can find building plans for planter boxes of all sizes at www.sunset.com/garden/fruits-veggies/small-space-salad-box-00400000011785/.
- **Composting:** Like a worm bin, a compost pile allows us to recycle food scraps and create fertile soil for the garden. For a compost pile, you need a 3' by 3' space outdoors, shovel, hose, lawn clippings, food scraps and a little soil. You can learn how to build a compost pile at www.csgn.org/csystgvideo.php?vid=1.
- **Recording the Weather:** Observing and recording the weather can be a fun family science project. Using a few simple tools, you can even create your own weather station! You can hang an outdoor thermometer in the shade to measure temperature. You can stick a yardstick in the snow and mark the starting level to measure snowfall overnight. By taping a ruler inside of a can and placing the can outdoors, you can create a simple rain gauge. You can hang a flag or windsock to measure wind direction. You can also note each day if it's sunny, partly cloudy or cloudy. Place all of these instruments in one outdoor area and you will have a weather station for daily observation and recording!

February

Family Garden Activity: Root View Cups

Have you and your kids ever wondered what a plant's roots look like underground? Just like the plant parts we can see above ground, roots come in all shapes and sizes. Some are stringy and fibrous, while others are thick and round. As you can see with carrots and beets, roots even come in a variety of colors. To see roots grow, you can make a root view cup. You'll just need two clear plastic drinking cups, a nail, black construction paper and a pair of scissors. Take one cup and use the nail to poke a hole in the bottom. This will be your root view cup. Take the other cup and cut a slit from the lip to the base. Then cut out the entire base, which should leave you with a plastic arc. Trace this arc onto your black construction paper and then cut it out, adding a little extra onto the end for overlap. Wrap the paper around the first cup (in-tact cup with hole at bottom) and tape the paper together. You now have a root view cup!

You can fill your cup with seed starting mix and plant seeds along the cup's edges. As you water the seeds, the roots will grow. The paper will keep the light out, but you can slip it off now and again to view your roots. Try planting different seeds to see how their roots differ. Some fun ones are carrots, fava beans, rainbow chard and radishes.

Making Root View Cups

Materials:

- 1 clear plastic drinking cup to serve as a template
- 1 clear plastic drinking cup for each student
- Nail
- Black construction paper
- Scissors

What to Do:

1. To make the paper sleeve template, cut straight down one side of a cup. Next, cut off the bottom of the cup and the top rim. This will give you a curved-shape that you can lay flat and trace onto construction paper. Trace the shape onto the black construction paper, adding a little extra onto the end. You will be wrapping this piece of construction paper around the cup, and the ends need to overlap. This paper will keep the light out.
2. Take one cup and use the nail to poke a hole in the bottom. This will be your root view cup.
3. Wrap the paper around the cup. You now have a root view cup!
4. Fill the cup with seed starting mix.

Seasonal Recipe: Baked Sweet Potato “Fries”

Ingredients:

- 2 sweet potatoes
- canola or olive oil cooking spray

(optional) Season to taste with pepper, paprika or garlic powder.

Steps:

1. Preheat the oven to 450° F.
2. Wash sweet potatoes and cut off the tips.
3. Cut each sweet potato in half and place the flat end down.
4. Cut each half into 4 long, thick pieces.
5. Place on a baking sheet and spray lightly with olive cooking spray and a pinch of pepper.
6. Bake for 15 minutes, remove and toss, and then bake for another 10 minutes.
7. If desired, sprinkle with a bit more salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm.

Nutrition Tip:

Keep on hand fruits and vegetables that are easy to prepare fresh for snacks. Some parents keep pre-cut fruits and vegetables ready in the fridge to make snack time easy.

Storybooks:

These are wonderful stories to read as you and your family delve into gardening and cooking together:

Two Old Potatoes and Me, by John Coy and Carolyn Fisher

Tops and Bottoms, by Janet Stevens

What do Roots Do?, by Kathlee V. Kudlinski

Math Potatoes, by Greg Tang

Just Enough Carrots, by Stuart J. Murphy

The Carrot Seed, by Ruth Krauss

Winter Gardening Tips:

- **Garden Planning:** Cold, dark winter days are an ideal time to start planning your spring garden. Head to a local garden center or go online to order a free seed catalog. Then, together with your kids, take time to browse through the possibilities. Once you've chosen plants to grow, you can use the information from the catalog or the back of your seed packets to figure out when each plant needs to be planted. From there, you can make a planting calendar that will guide you through the spring.

- **Building:** When the weather permits, winter is also a nice time to dive into infrastructure projects for your garden, such as building a planter box. Planter boxes and pots provide a great way to garden in small spaces, such as on rooftops, stoops or indoors. You can find building plans for planter boxes of all sizes at www.sunset.com/garden/fruits-veggies/small-space-salad-box-0040000011785/.
- **Composting:** Like a worm bin, a compost pile allows us to recycle food scraps and create fertile soil for the garden. For a compost pile, you need a 3' by 3' space outdoors, shovel, hose, lawn clippings, food scraps and a little soil. You can learn how to build a compost pile at www.csgn.org/csystgvideo.php?vid=1.
- **Recording the Weather:** Observing and recording the weather can be a fun family science project. Using a few simple tools, you can even create your own weather station! You can hang an outdoor thermometer in the shade to measure temperature. You can stick a yardstick in the snow and mark the starting level to measure snowfall overnight. By taping a ruler inside of a can and placing the can outdoors, you can create a simple rain gauge. You can hang a flag or windsock to measure wind direction. You can also note each day if it's sunny, partly cloudy or cloudy. Place all of these instruments in one outdoor area and you will have a weather station for daily observation and recording!



March

Family Garden Activity: Make Your Own Seed Starting Mix

When you plant seeds in containers, it's best to use a seed starting mix. You can buy this mix in garden centers or you can make your own. This is a fun activity for kids who like to get dirty and mix things together. To make your own, in a wheelbarrow or bucket, combine:

- Five parts compost (If you have your own pile or worm bin, now's a great chance to sift it and use the finished compost. If not, you can buy organic compost at a garden center.)
- Four parts soil
- One part sand (It's best to purchase the sand at a garden center.)

Read the Spring Gardening Tips below for ideas on how to use your seed starting mix.

Family Garden Activity: Seed Mosaics

Seeds, like many things from the garden, come in a wide variety of colors, shapes and sizes. You can use seeds to make mosaics to decorate your home. Gather a variety of seeds from plants in the garden, a garden center or even from a soup mix at the grocery store. Pour them out onto a plate or tray. Next, take a piece of dark paper and make a design with glue. Arrange the seeds on top of the glue and let dry to make a seed mosaic.

Seasonal Recipe: Guacamole

Ingredients:

- 1 large garlic clove
- 2 ripe avocados
- 1 lemon

(Optional) Season to taste with pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, low-sodium soy sauce, etc.

Steps:

1. Mince garlic.
2. Cut lemon in half and squeeze to get 2 tablespoons of lemon juice. Pour lemon juice over garlic.
3. Cut avocados in half. Remove pits and scoop avocado into bowl over garlic and lemon.
4. Use a fork to mash everything together.
5. Season to taste.
6. Serve immediately with tortilla chips, quesadillas or tacos.

Nutrition Tip:

If you have a home garden, involve your children in every step of growing and harvesting food. Children often eat vegetables right from the plant, even ones they have never shown interest in before. They may also feel proud of what they bring inside in their harvest basket, making them more likely to want to help prepare and eat it. Include in your garden things that are easy for children to pick and eat from the plants, such as edible-pod peas, green beans, cherry tomatoes, lemon cucumbers or berries. If you have space, also include some just-for-fun elements, such as giant sunflowers and pumpkins.

Storybooks:

These are wonderful stories to read as you and your family delve into gardening and cooking together:

One Bean, by Anne Rockwell

A Seed is Sleepy, by Dianna Hutts Aston

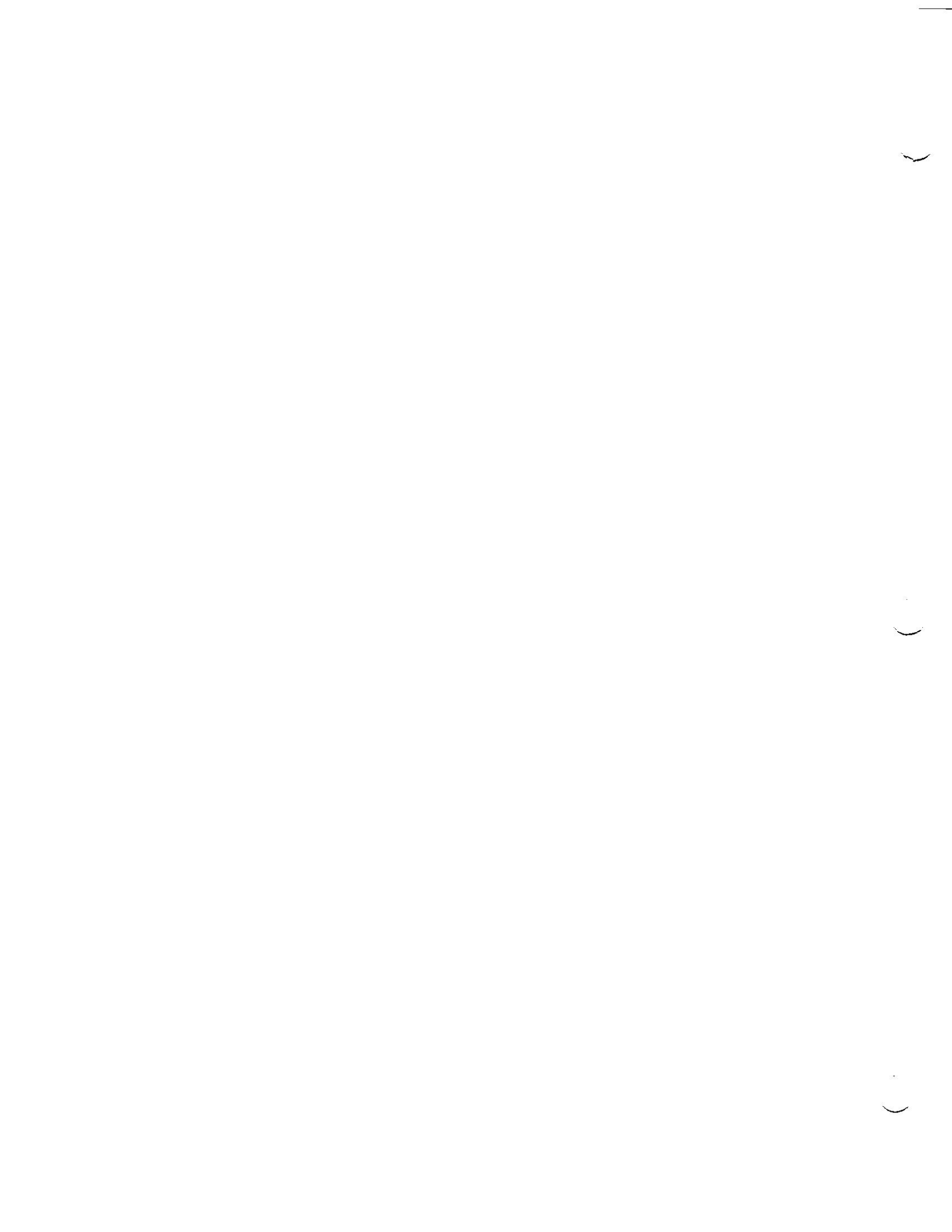
Anno's Magic Seeds, by Mitsumasa Anno

Ten Seeds, by Ruth Brown

Spring Gardening Tips:

- **Starting Seeds Indoors:** Spring is the time to start seeds indoors for your summer garden. Some plants, like root crops, grow best when planted directly outdoors into a garden bed. Others thrive when a gardener starts them in a container indoors and then transplants them out into the garden later in the season. You can use a seed packet to find out which method is best for your plants. Once you've determined which plants to start indoors, pick up some empty seed-starting packs at a local garden center. Fill with seed starting mix and moisten lightly with water. Now, you're ready to plant. The seed packet will include when to plant your seeds, how deep to plant them and when you can expect them to emerge. Once planted, cover each with soil and water until the seed starting mix is about as moist as a wrung-out sponge. Place near a warm, sunny window in a greenhouse or under artificial lights, and water frequently so that the soil never dries out. Make labels for your plants to remember what you planted and when. It can be fun to write a wish for your plant on the label before sticking it into the soil: "Grow, baby plant, grow!"
- **Choosing Transplants at the Nursery:** When you go to a garden center to choose baby plants, you may be lured by a tiny plant that's already growing a red tomato or a baby pea plant that already has pods. The best young plants, however, are the ones without fruit! You want your baby plant to put its energy into making roots, stems and leaves — all of which will help it make loads of fruit later in the season. So look for the greenest, healthiest plants, and if they make fruits before they are fully grown, pick them off to help the plant "refocus" on the task at hand.

- **Digging Garden Beds:** After the ground has thawed from winter's cold, dig your garden beds. Do this on a day when your soil is moist but not sopping wet. If you're gardening in the ground, use string and stakes to mark out an area about 3 feet wide and however long you like. Then, in the area you marked out or in your planting containers, add about 4-6 inches of finished compost on top of the bed. Use shovels or digging forks to stir the compost into the soil, breaking up any dirt clods as you go. You'll want the soil to be loose to a depth of at least one foot. This is a great task for families and friends to do together. Once the soil is loosened and compost is mixed in, you can rake it smooth on top. To watch a video about preparing garden beds, visit: www.csgn.org/csystgvideo.php?vid=5.
- **Planting Outdoors:** For root crops and other seeds that prefer to be planted directly into the soil outdoors, use your finger to dig a trench as deep as the planting depth indicated on your seed packet. Then, space the seeds in the trench, again according to the directions on the seed packet. Cover the seeds with soil and water until the soil is about as moist as a wrung-out sponge. For seedlings, such as the plants you started indoors or transplants you bought at a garden center, use a planting guide to find out how far apart to space your plants. Then, use chopsticks, pencils or hand trowels to map out where each plant will go in your garden bed or container. Once you've decided on placement, dig holes as big as the root ball of each plant. Gently remove each transplant from its container, place it in a hole and fill the hole with soil. Water all of your plants right away, using multiple passes over the same area to ensure that the water seeps to the bottom of the roots.



April

Family Garden Activity: Scavenger Hunt for Signs of Spring

Take a family walk around your neighborhood, a local park, a community farm or garden and see how many of the following things you can find:

- a. Bird singing a song
- b. Flower for each color of the rainbow
- c. New, bright green growth at the tip of a tree branch
- d. Baby plant just starting to appear out of the ground
- e. Mud puddle for splashing
- f. Baby animal: Look in waterways for tadpoles or baby ducks. Look in treetops for nests. Walk quietly on trails in natural areas to find baby rabbits, squirrels, quail, deer or any other baby animals. Visit a farm to see baby lambs, calves, chicks, and the like.

Seasonal Recipe: Green Garden Smoothies

Ingredients:

- 1 bunch kale, spinach or chard
- 1 cup 100% juice
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plain fat-free or low-fat yogurt
- 3-4 cups fresh and/or frozen fruit
- $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water

Steps:

1. Remove stems from greens. Coarsely chop greens or tear them into pieces. Fill blender.
2. Blend the greens with juice until smooth, about 1-2 minutes.
3. Add yogurt, fruit and water.
4. Blend until smooth. Drink right away or keep refrigerated for up to 24 hours.

Notes:

- *Let your smoothie change with the seasons. For example, a great winter smoothie might include apple or pear (cored and sliced, with skin), citrus fruit (peeled, sectioned and seeded) and frozen strawberries. Combining a tart-tasting fruit such as berries or citrus with milder fruits such as apples or persimmons compliments the greens and yields a tasty smoothie!*

- *Experiment with other greens. Beet greens, escarole and bok choy are great in smoothies.*
- *Enlist the help of little ones. Even a 2-year-old can stand on a chair at the counter and help tear up greens, add things to the blender and push the buttons. They then might be much more likely to sample and enjoy!*

Nutrition Tip:

Become aware of times your children are extra hungry and may be open to trying new things. One mom reports that her child will eat anything in the car on the way home from preschool: whole peppers, figs, cucumbers and whole bags of green beans and peas. Other parents have found that their children are open to trying new fruits and vegetables on outings, such as a day at the beach or a camping trip, or when they're with a group of friends who are tasting a new item.

Storybooks:

These are wonderful stories to read as you and your family delve into gardening and cooking together:

Hawk, I'm Your Brother, by Byrd Baylor

Flute's Journey: The Life of a Wood Thrush, by Lynne Cherry

The Magpies' Nest Retold, by Joanna Foster

Grandmothers' Pigeon, by Lois Erdrich

Spring Gardening Tips:

- **Starting Seeds Indoors:** Spring is the time to start seeds indoors for your summer garden. Some plants, like root crops, grow best when planted directly outdoors into a garden bed. Others thrive when a gardener starts them in a container indoors and then transplants them out into the garden later in the season. You can use a seed packet to find out which method is best for your plants. Once you've determined which plants to start indoors, pick up some empty seed-starting packs at a local garden center. Fill with seed starting mix and moisten lightly with water. Now, you're ready to plant. The seed packet will include when to plant your seeds, how deep to plant them and when you can expect them to emerge. Once planted, cover each with soil and water until the seed starting mix is about as moist as a wrung-out sponge. Place near a warm, sunny window in a greenhouse or under artificial lights, and water frequently so that the soil never dries out. Make labels for your plants to remember what you planted and when. It can be fun to write a wish for your plant on the label before sticking it into the soil: "Grow, baby plant, grow!"
- **Choosing Transplants at the Nursery:** When you go to a garden center to choose baby plants, you may be lured by a tiny plant that's already growing a red tomato or a baby pea plant that already has pods. The best young plants, however, are the ones without fruit! You

want your baby plant to put its energy into making roots, stems and leaves — all of which will help it make loads of fruit later in the season. So look for the greenest, healthiest plants, and if they make fruits before they are fully grown, pick them off to help the plant “refocus” on the task at hand.

- **Digging Garden Beds:** After the ground has thawed from winter’s cold, dig your garden beds. Do this on a day when your soil is moist but not sopping wet. If you’re gardening in the ground, use string and stakes to mark out an area about 3 feet wide and however long you like. Then, in the area you marked out or in your planting containers, add about 4-6 inches of finished compost on top of the bed. Use shovels or digging forks to stir the compost into the soil, breaking up any dirt clods as you go. You’ll want the soil to be loose to a depth of at least one foot. This is a great task for families and friends to do together. Once the soil is loosened and compost is mixed in, you can rake it smooth on top. To watch a video about preparing garden beds, visit: www.csgn.org/csystgvideo.php?vid=5.
- **Planting Outdoors:** For root crops and other seeds that prefer to be planted directly into the soil outdoors, use your finger to dig a trench as deep as the planting depth indicated on your seed packet. Then, space the seeds in the trench, again according to the directions on the seed packet. Cover the seeds with soil and water until the soil is about as moist as a wrung-out sponge. For seedlings, such as the plants you started indoors or transplants you bought at a garden center, use a planting guide to find out how far apart to space your plants. Then, use chopsticks, pencils or hand trowels to map out where each plant will go in your garden bed or container. Once you’ve decided on placement, dig holes as big as the root ball of each plant. Gently remove each transplant from its container, place it in a hole and fill the hole with soil. Water all of your plants right away, using multiple passes over the same area to ensure that the water seeps to the bottom of the roots.



May

Family Garden Activity: Chive Heads

Spring is here and seeds are sprouting. Here is a fun activity involving new spring sprouts. You'll need a 3 inch square planting container, paper and coloring supplies, tape, seed starting mix and chive seeds. Cut the paper into a strip to wrap around your pot. Fold the strip into quarters, and in each section draw a face. Leave the top of each head open without any hair. Now, wrap the paper around the pot and tape it in place. Fill your pot with seed starting mix and scatter chive seeds on top. Cover with a thin layer of soil and moisten with water. If you water your seeds and don't let them dry out, in just over a week you should start to see your four chive heads growing chive hair! Once the chives are over 2 inches tall, you can start giving them creative haircuts and adding the chive tips to salads, dips and meals.

Seasonal Recipe: Strawberry Parfait

Makes 4 servings.

Ingredients:

- 2 8-oz containers of fat-free or low-fat vanilla yogurt
- 1 pint fresh strawberries
- Slivered, toasted almonds

Steps:

1. Wash, top and slice all strawberries.
2. Fill 4 glasses with about 1 inch of yogurt.
3. Top with a layer of strawberries.
4. Repeat until all yogurt and strawberries are used.
5. Top each glass with a layer of slivered almonds. Chill and serve.

Nutrition Tip:

Explore your local farmers market with your child. Let your child help pick fresh fruits or vegetables to snack on, pay the farmer and carry the bag. Much of what you buy may disappear before you get back to the car! At the farmers market, you also may be able to buy fruit in large quantities (a whole flat of strawberries, for example) for low prices, especially at the end of the day, which you can freeze for using later in smoothies, jams or with yogurt.

Storybooks:

These are wonderful stories to read as you and your family delve into gardening and cooking together:

The First Strawberries, by Joseph Bruchac

Oliver's Fruit Salad, by Vivian French

Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher, by Molly Bang

A Fruit is a Suitcase for Seeds, by Jean Richards

Spring Gardening Tips:

- **Starting Seeds Indoors:** Spring is the time to start seeds indoors for your summer garden. Some plants, like root crops, grow best when planted directly outdoors into a garden bed. Others thrive when a gardener starts them in a container indoors and then transplants them out into the garden later in the season. You can use a seed packet to find out which method is best for your plants. Once you've determined which plants to start indoors, pick up some empty seed-starting packs at a local garden center. Fill with seed starting mix and moisten lightly with water. Now, you're ready to plant. The seed packet will include when to plant your seeds, how deep to plant them and when you can expect them to emerge. Once planted, cover each with soil and water until the seed starting mix is about as moist as a wrung-out sponge. Place near a warm, sunny window in a greenhouse or under artificial lights, and water frequently so that the soil never dries out. Make labels for your plants to remember what you planted and when. It can be fun to write a wish for your plant on the label before sticking it into the soil: "Grow, baby plant, grow!"
- **Choosing Transplants at the Nursery:** When you go to a garden center to choose baby plants, you may be lured by a tiny plant that's already growing a red tomato or a baby pea plant that already has pods. The best young plants, however, are the ones without fruit! You want your baby plant to put its energy into making roots, stems and leaves — all of which will help it make loads of fruit later in the season. So look for the greenest, healthiest plants, and if they make fruits before they are fully grown, pick them off to help the plant "refocus" on the task at hand.
- **Digging Garden Beds:** After the ground has thawed from winter's cold, dig your garden beds. Do this on a day when your soil is moist but not sopping wet. If you're gardening in the ground, use string and stakes to mark out an area about 3 feet wide and however long you like. Then, in the area you marked out or in your planting containers, add about 4-6 inches of finished compost on top of the bed. Use shovels or digging forks to stir the compost into the soil, breaking up any dirt clods as you go. You'll want the soil to be loose to a depth of at least one foot. This is a great task for families and friends to do together. Once the soil is loosened and compost is mixed in, you can rake it smooth on top. To watch a video about preparing garden beds, visit: www.csgn.org/csystgvideo.php?vid=5.

- **Planting Outdoors:** For root crops and other seeds that prefer to be planted directly into the soil outdoors, use your finger to dig a trench as deep as the planting depth indicated on your seed packet. Then, space the seeds in the trench, again according to the directions on the seed packet. Cover the seeds with soil and water until the soil is about as moist as a wrung-out sponge. For seedlings, such as the plants you started indoors or transplants you bought at a garden center, use a planting guide to find out how far apart to space your plants. Then, use chopsticks, pencils or hand trowels to map out where each plant will go in your garden bed or container. Once you've decided on placement, dig holes as big as the root ball of each plant. Gently remove each transplant from its container, place it in a hole and fill the hole with soil. Water all of your plants right away, using multiple passes over the same area to ensure that the water seeps to the bottom of the roots.



June

Family Garden Activity: Sun Tea

In the heat of the summer, you can use the sun's energy to do some outdoor cooking. To make sun tea, you'll just need a large glass jar, herbs from your garden and a hot, sunny day. Cut five sprigs of edible herbs, such as mint, peppermint, lavender or lemon balm, wash them off and put them in a clean glass jar, quart size or larger. Fill the jar with water and set out in the direct sunlight. In a few hours, the flavor from the herbs should have infused the water. Pour the sun tea over ice for a nice cool beverage on a warm day.

Seasonal Recipe: Sunflower Seed Green Bean Pâté

Ingredients:

- 1 cup unsalted sunflower seeds, dry roasted on a frying pan
- 2 large onions, sliced thin
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 pound green beans, ends removed and cut into ½ inch pieces
- 8 cups water for boiling green beans
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 3 scallions, chopped

Steps:

1. Heat oil in a frying pan and sauté onion until soft and a little browned.
2. Put green beans in a pot with boiling water and boil for 4-5 minutes.
3. Grind sunflower seeds in a food processor or blender. Add green beans, scallion and ½ cup of the cooking water and blend until creamy.
4. Serve pâté with slices of bread or toast.

Nutrition Tip:

Place a chair or stool at your kitchen counter to make your children feel welcome to participate in food preparation. Offer age-appropriate tasks to eager participants, such as tearing up spinach leaves or pushing the buttons on the blender for toddlers or measuring and chopping ingredients for older children.

Storybooks:

These are wonderful stories to read as you and your family delve into gardening and cooking together:

Sunflowers/Girasoles, by Gwendolyn Zepeda

Camille and the Sunflowers, by Laurence Anholt

Sunflower House, by Eve Bunting and Kathryn Hewitt

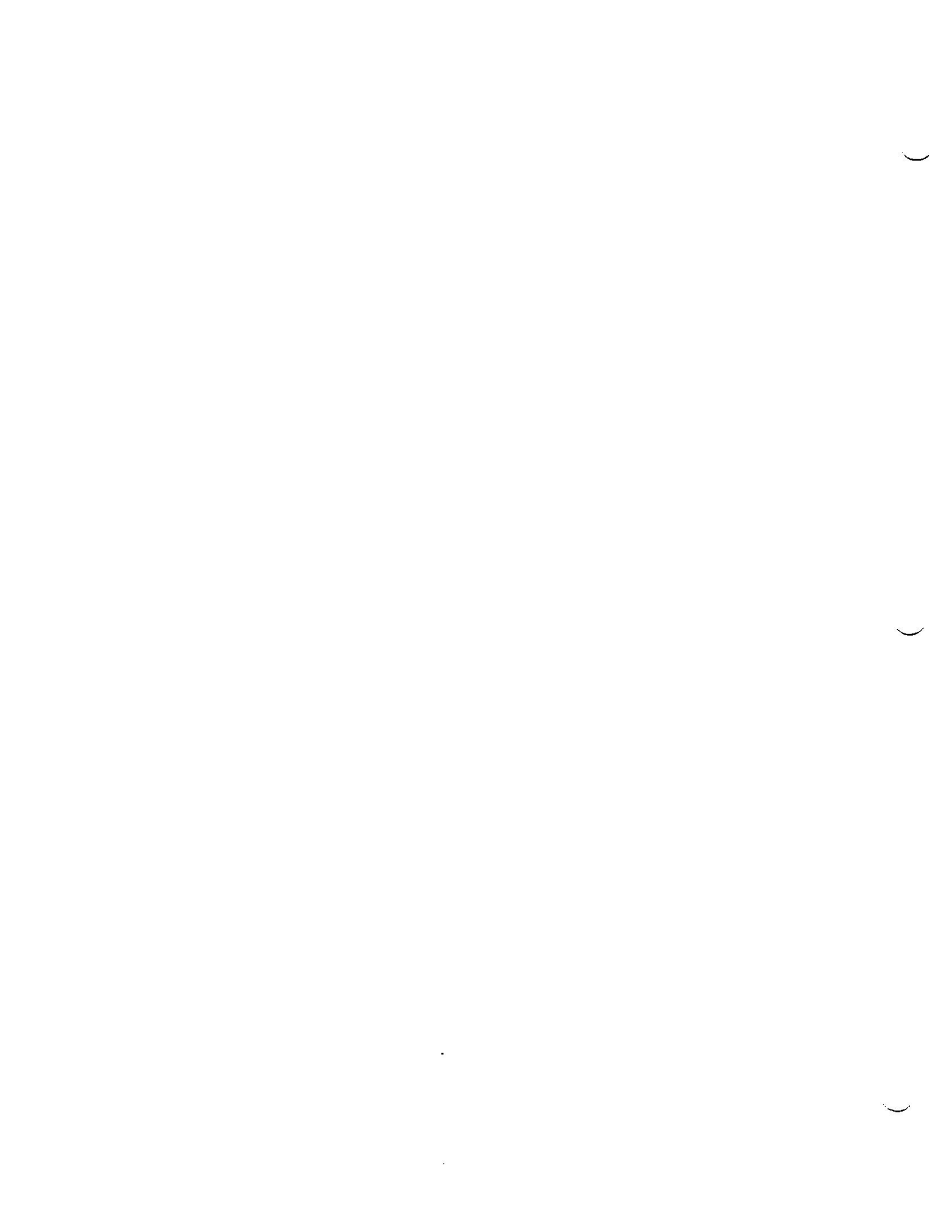
Sunflower Sal, by Janet Anderson and Elizabeth Johns

Sunflower, by Meila Ford

Summer Gardening Tips:

- **Watering:** With newly planted seeds, you'll need to water frequently enough so that the soil never dries out. Once the seeds sprout, you can water less frequently. To determine if your garden needs water, use the squeeze test: Dig a hole as deep as your plants' roots. Take a handful of soil from the hole and squeeze it. If no ball forms, water right away. If a ball forms but breaks apart with a few gentle taps, think about watering soon. If the ball sticks tight or oozes, wait to water. When you water with a watering can or fan nozzle, sprinkle an area until the water makes the soil shine and then move on to another area. As the water seeps into the soil, the shine will disappear, and then you can return to that area and water it again. Do this repeatedly, until the soil is moist to the depth of the roots.
- **Mulching:** You can add mulch to keep the moisture in your soil. Sprinkle compost, leaves, straw, hay, newspaper, wood chips, bark or sawdust over your soil and around your plants to block weeds and hold in moisture. Remove mulch in the cool months to allow the soil to warm.
- **Pest Control:** With kids in the garden, it's best to avoid pesticides, herbicides and other potentially harmful chemicals. So how do we keep the pests away? Here are some tips:
 - Ask local garden centers for suggestions on plant varieties that are pest-resistant and well suited to your area.
 - Create pest barriers, such as deer fences around your garden, gopher wire under your beds or bird netting or row cover crop over your plants.
 - Add compost to your soil. Just like healthy people, healthy well-fed plants have stronger defenses against diseases and pests.
 - Hand pick pests off plants. "Snail patrol" is a favorite garden activity of many young children. Once you have collected snails, the best way to protect your garden is to kill them. If you have chickens or know anyone who does, you can feed the snails to the chickens.

- **Harvesting:** As plants produce ripe fruits and vegetables, it's time for you and your kids to harvest and enjoy the fruits of your labor. To harvest root crops, loosen the soil with a digging fork and pull. For leaf crops, pick off outer leaves at the base, leaving the plant in the ground to continue growing. Turn fruits up toward the sky. If the stem breaks off, it was ripe. If it requires more of a tug, leave it on the plant to ripen. Most importantly, don't be shy about harvesting. The more you pick, the more food a plant will produce.



July

Family Garden Activity: Visit a Farmers Market

July is a wonderful time of year to take a family trip to your local farmers market and see what's growing in your area. At a farmers market, you'll discover what crops grow in your area, meet people growing local foods and try new fruits and vegetables. You can give your family a challenge, such as trying a piece of produce in every color of the rainbow. Let your child help pick out some fresh fruits or vegetables to snack on, pay the farmer and carry the bag. Much of what you buy may disappear before you get back to the car! To find a farmers market near you, visit www.localharvest.org/.

Seasonal Recipe: Cool Cucumber Soup

(Adapted from *Salad People* by Molly Katzen)

Ingredients:

- 2 medium cucumbers
- 1 cup plain fat-free or low-fat yogurt
- 10 leaves fresh mint
- 2 teaspoons honey
- Nonstick spray for the honey spoon

Steps:

1. Peel the cucumbers, then halve them lengthwise.
2. Use a spoon to scrape out the seeds.
3. Cut the cucumbers into large chunks.
4. Place the cucumber in the blender with the yogurt, mint and honey.
5. Puree until smooth—or mostly smooth.
6. Serve cold. You can serve in bowls with spoons or pour into cups for drinking.

Note: This soup separates if kept in the fridge for more than a day. To re-blend, shake the container or stir from the bottom.

Yield: 3-4 servings (2 cups total)

Nutrition Tip:

At the farmers market, you also may be able to buy fruit in large quantities, such as a whole flat of strawberries. At the end of the day, farmers are often especially eager to unload leftover produce at a good price. Take home as much as you can carry and you can freeze for later use in smoothies, jams or with yogurt.

Storybooks:

These are wonderful stories to read as you and your family delve into gardening and cooking together:

Who Grew My Soup, by Tom Darbyshire

Growing Vegetable Soup, by Lois Ehlert

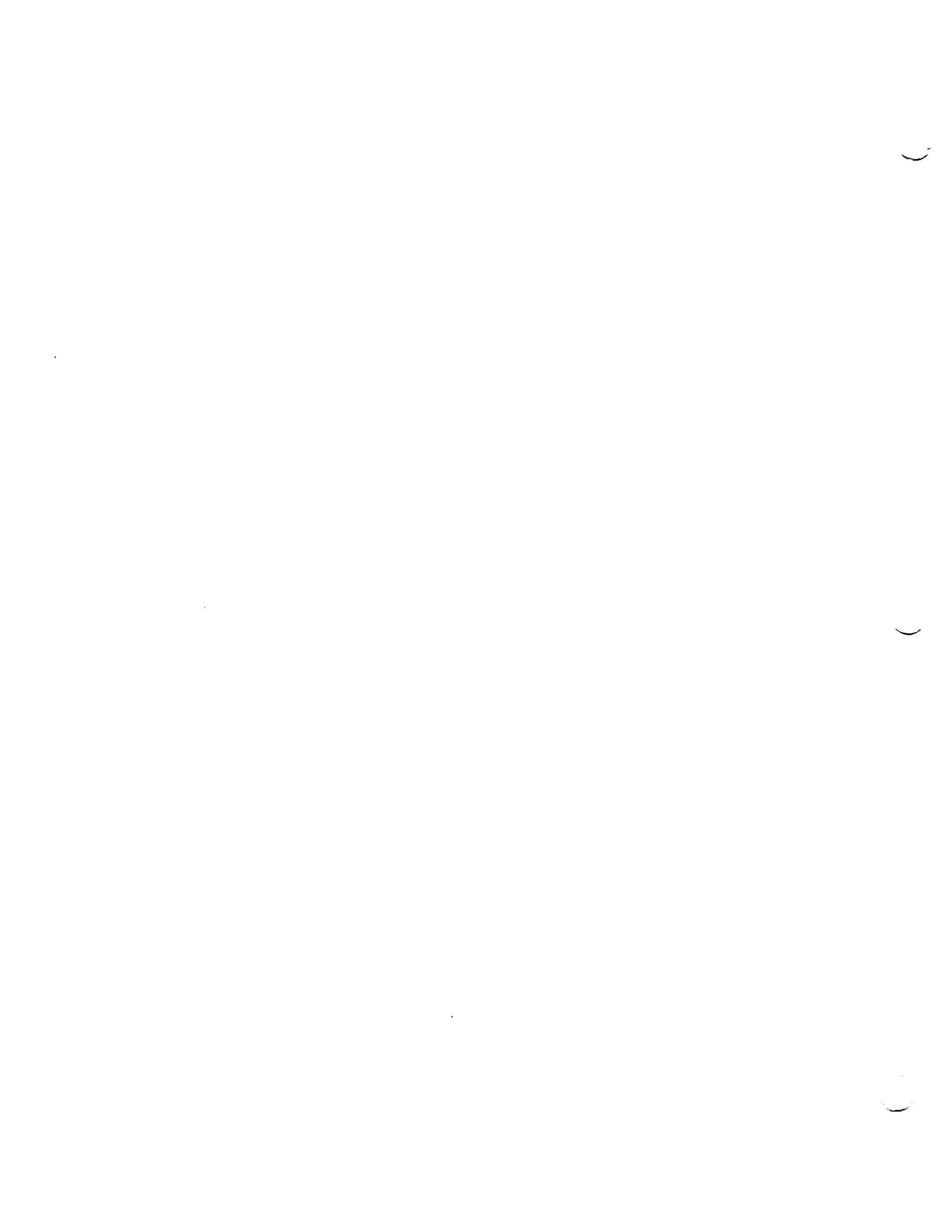
Grandpa's Garden Lunch, by Judith Caseley

The Ugly Vegetables, by Grace Lin

Summer Gardening Tips:

- **Watering:** With newly planted seeds, you'll need to water frequently enough so that the soil never dries out. Once the seeds sprout, you can water less frequently. To determine if your garden needs water, use the squeeze test: Dig a hole as deep as your plants' roots. Take a handful of soil from the hole and squeeze it. If no ball forms, water right away. If a ball forms but breaks apart with a few gentle taps, think about watering soon. If the ball sticks tight or oozes, wait to water. When you water with a watering can or fan nozzle, sprinkle an area until the water makes the soil shine and then move on to another area. As the water seeps into the soil, the shine will disappear, and then you can return to that area and water it again. Do this repeatedly, until the soil is moist to the depth of the roots.
- **Mulching:** You can add mulch to keep the moisture in your soil. Sprinkle compost, leaves, straw, hay, newspaper, wood chips, bark or sawdust over your soil and around your plants to block weeds and hold in moisture. Remove mulch in the cool months to allow the soil to warm.
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 - Ask local garden centers for suggestions on plant varieties that are pest-resistant and well suited to your area.
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 - Add compost to your soil. Just like healthy people, healthy well-fed plants have stronger defenses against diseases and pests.

- Hand pick pests off plants. “Snail patrol” is a favorite garden activity of many young children. Once you have collected snails, the best way to protect your garden is to kill them. If you have chickens or know anyone who does, you can feed the snails to the chickens.
- **Harvesting:** As plants produce ripe fruits and vegetables, it’s time for you and your kids to harvest and enjoy the fruits of your labor. To harvest root crops, loosen the soil with a digging fork and pull. For leaf crops, pick off outer leaves at the base, leaving the plant in the ground to continue growing. Turn fruits up toward the sky. If the stem breaks off, it was ripe. If it requires more of a tug, leave it on the plant to ripen. Most importantly, don’t be shy about harvesting. The more you pick, the more food a plant will produce.



August

Family Garden Activity: Have a Harvest Party

With so many fruits and vegetables ripening in the garden, late summer is a wonderful time to host a harvest party. Invite your family and friends to bring a dish featuring a seasonal fruit or vegetable, including tomato basil salad, corn on the cob, summer squash lasagna and apple crisp. If you have space, you can set up a large table and host the party in the garden. You can decorate for your party with seasonal objects from the garden.

Seasonal Recipe: Pesto

Ingredients:

- 2 cups fresh basil leaves, packed
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup olive oil
- 3 tablespoons unsalted, unroasted pine nuts or walnuts
- 3 garlic cloves

Steps:

1. Place a few handfuls of basil leaves into food processor or blender with ½ of the oil. Whip until well chopped. Continue adding basil a few handfuls at a time until you have added all of it.
2. Add the nuts and garlic, and blend again.
3. Add the Parmesan cheese and blend while slowly drizzling in the rest of the olive oil. You may need to stop occasionally to scrape down sides of the container.
4. Process pesto until it forms a thick, smooth paste. Serve over pasta, on pizza, or on crackers.

Nutrition Tip:

Late summer is a great time to visit a local you-pick farm to harvest and enjoy fruit together. When you get home, you can stock up your freezer for future smoothies.

Storybooks:

These are wonderful stories to read as you and your family delve into gardening and cooking together:

Corn, by Gail Gibbons

Corn is Maize, by Alike

The Popcorn Book, by Tomie dePaola

Whose Garden is It?, by Mary Ann Hoberman

Summer Gardening Tips:

- **Watering:** With newly planted seeds, you'll need to water frequently enough so that the soil never dries out. Once the seeds sprout, you can water less frequently. To determine if your garden needs water, use the squeeze test: Dig a hole as deep as your plants' roots. Take a handful of soil from the hole and squeeze it. If no ball forms, water right away. If a ball forms but breaks apart with a few gentle taps, think about watering soon. If the ball sticks tight or oozes, wait to water. When you water with a watering can or fan nozzle, sprinkle an area until the water makes the soil shine and then move on to another area. As the water seeps into the soil, the shine will disappear, and then you can return to that area and water it again. Do this repeatedly, until the soil is moist to the depth of the roots.
- **Mulching:** You can add mulch to keep the moisture in your soil. Sprinkle compost, leaves, straw, hay, newspaper, wood chips, bark or sawdust over your soil and around your plants to block weeds and hold in moisture. Remove mulch in the cool months to allow the soil to warm.
- **Pest Control:** With kids in the garden, it's best to avoid pesticides, herbicides and other potentially harmful chemicals. So how do we keep the pests away? Here are some tips:
 - Ask local garden centers for suggestions on plant varieties that are pest-resistant and well suited to your area.
 - Create pest barriers, such as deer fences around your garden, gopher wire under you beds or bird netting or row cover crop over your plants.
 - Add compost to your soil. Just like healthy people, healthy well-fed plants have stronger defenses against diseases and pests.
 - Hand pick pests off plants. "Snail patrol" is a favorite garden activity of many young children. Once you have collected snails, the best way to protect your garden is to kill them. If you have chickens or know anyone who does, you can feed the snails to the chickens.
- **Harvesting:** As plants produce ripe fruits and vegetables, it's time for you and your kids to harvest and enjoy the fruits of your labor. To harvest root crops, loosen the soil with a digging fork and pull. For leaf crops, pick off outer leaves at the base, leaving the plant in the ground to continue growing. Turn fruits up toward the sky. If the stem breaks off, it was ripe. If it requires more of a tug, leave it on the plant to ripen. Most importantly, don't be shy about harvesting. The more you pick, the more food a plant will produce.

September

Family Garden Activity: Pressed Leaves

Colorful leaves are treasured signs of fall. To capture some of this beauty and bring it indoors, take a walk with your kids and collect dry fallen leaves. The more intact the leaves are, the better. See how many colors you can find. When you get home, set each leaf between pages toward the back of a heavy book. Stack more heavy books on top and let them sit for about two weeks. When you remove the leaves, they should be dry and flat. Glue pressed leaves onto note cards to make stationary sets, or use cardstock to create pressed leaf bookmarks. You can also brush the underside of the leaves with acrylic paint and then press the leaf, paint-side-down, onto gift bags or brown kraft paper to make homemade gift wrapping.

Seasonal Recipe: Applesauce

Ingredients:

- Up to 5 pounds of apples
- 100% apple juice

Steps:

1. If you have a food mill, cut the apples in half or in quarters if they're large. If you do not have a food mill, core and peel the apples and then cut them into halves or quarters.
2. Pour about half an inch of apple juice into a pot, add the apples and place over medium heat. Cover.
3. When the water starts to boil, uncover the pot. Cook the apples for about 30 minutes, stirring and mashing occasionally until the apples reach your desired consistency.
4. If you have a food mill, pass the mixture through to get smooth applesauce. If not, enjoy a chunky applesauce.
5. You can freeze applesauce in glass jars and defrost as necessary.

Tip: Remember, applesauce is delicious when served warm. It also makes a great, kid-friendly compliment to savory dishes, such as pork chops or beef stew.

Nutrition Tip:

Involve your children in selecting fruits and vegetables at the farmers market or grocery store. Give them the grocery list and have them find each fruit or vegetable. The more involved they are in every step of acquiring and preparing food, the more likely they will be to eat and enjoy it.

Storybooks:

These are all wonderful stories to read as you and your family delve into gardening and cooking together.

How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World, by Marjorie Priceman

Apples, by Gail Gibbons

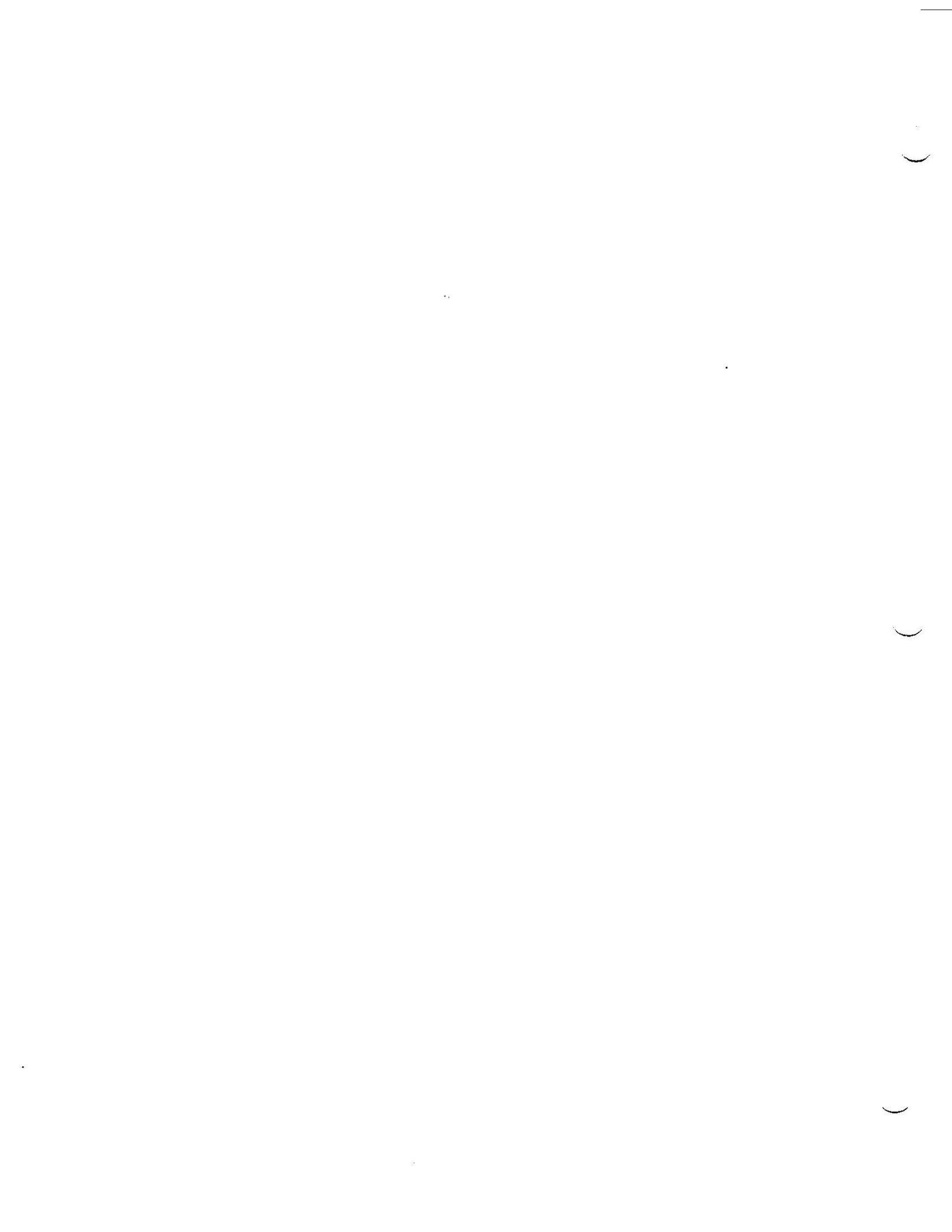
The Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree, by Gail Gibbons

Johnny Appleseed, by Steven Kellogg

Fall Gardening Tips:

- **Saving Seeds:** A great way for kids to learn about the life cycle of a plant is harvesting seeds from a fully-grown plant in the fall, then sowing those seeds and watching new plants emerge and grow in the spring. To get started, look around the garden together for plants that have produced full-sized seeds, such as beans, peas, corn, sunflowers and lettuce. Let the seeds dry on the plant for as long as possible and then, before any big rain falls, gather seeds from each plant. For beans and peas, pick off the pods. For corn, gather whole ears and for sunflowers take off entire flower heads. For lettuce, place a paper bag under the flowering stalk and shake to let the seeds fall in. Then, remove the beans and peas from the pods, place all of the seeds in a single layer on newspaper and allow them to dry in a warm room with plenty of airflow. Stir regularly to keep them from molding. Once they're dry, remove the corn from the cobs and the sunflower seeds from the flower. Store seeds in well marked, tightly sealed envelopes. Kids often enjoy decorating seed envelopes with pictures and information about the plants.
- **Drying Herbs:** Fall is a good time to collect fresh herbs and dry them for use in the winter months. Use shears to cut sprigs of your favorite herbs: dill, marjoram, oregano, rosemary, thyme, and the like. Cut at least 6 inch stems and trim leaves from the bottom. Once you have enough of one herb to fill your hand, bind together with a rubber band. You may want to attach a label to the herb because they often look similar once dry. Hang herb bundles upside down in a warm, dry, dark place, such as a closet or garage. You may want to put an old sheet underneath the bundles to catch debris. If you don't have a dark area, you can also poke holes in paper bags and cover each bundle with a bag. Allow to dry for two weeks, and then store in airtight containers.
- **Cleaning Up the Garden:** As the days become shorter and chillier, your summer plants will start to fade. It's time to pull them out and prepare your garden for winter. Remove all of the supports or trellises and all of the spent plants from your garden, and rake up any debris. Cover the ground in a layer of compost or composted manure. You can plant a cover crop such as rye, clover, buckwheat or bell beans, or let your garden rest until the spring. If you live in an area with mild winters, you can plant a fall garden with cool weather crops such as leafy greens, broccoli and peas.

- **Planting Bulbs:** In areas with cold winters, you can plant bulbs as long as the soil is soft enough to dig. Dig a hole about three times the diameter of the bulb. Mix some bone meal into the soil at the bottom of the hole and plant the bulb with the pointed side up. If you struggle with rodents, plant the bulbs in a cage made of hardware cloth, or stick with daffodils, which most animals avoid. Fill the hole with soil and water immediately. From then on, you should only need to worry about water if you're having an unusually dry winter. Come spring, your efforts should be colorfully rewarded!



October

Family Garden Activity: Apple People

Make a spooky shrunken head from a peeled, carved, dried apple! You'll need an apple, knife, marker, cup of lemon juice, a tablespoon of salt and a stick. Using your marker, draw some eyes, a nose and a mouth onto your apple. Make the features large because they will shrink. Using this outline as your guide, carve the apple to look like a face. Combine the lemon juice and salt in a bowl and soak the apple for 30 seconds. Pat dry. Set the apple in a warm dry spot to dry and, as it does, the features will distort. Put the apple on a stick, prop it inside a vase or potted plant, stand back and admire your spooky shrunken head! You can find photos at www.marthastewart.com.

Seasonal Recipes: Spooky Snacks (Healthy Alternatives to Halloween Candy)

Interested in encouraging healthier snacks this Halloween?

Try these kid-tested spooky snacks:

- **Witches' Brooms:** Lay a fruit leather flat and cut fringes about half way across along one of the long sides. Roll the fruit leather around the bottom of a straight pretzel stick to make a sweet and salty Witches' Broom.
- **Witches' Warts and Teeth:** Roast pumpkin seeds in an oven for 20 minutes. Remove, cool and add raisins. Label the bowl "Witches' Warts and Teeth."
- **Ghost on a Stick:** Peel a banana and break in half. Stick each half onto a popsicle stick. Press in three raisins to make eyes and a mouth for your "Ghost on a Stick."

Nutrition Tip:

Model enjoyment of fruits and vegetables at every opportunity. Your children will learn more from watching you eat these healthful foods than from any other way.

Storybooks:

These are wonderful stories to read as you and your family delve into gardening and cooking together:

The Pumpkin Circle, by George Levinson

Pumpkin, Pumpkin, by Jeann Titherington

Pumpkin Soup, by Helen Cooper

Wild Child, by Lynn Plourde and Greg Couch

Fall Gardening Tips:

- **Saving Seeds:** A great way for kids to learn about the life cycle of a plant is harvesting seeds from a fully-grown plant in the fall, then sowing those seeds and watching new plants emerge and grow in the spring. To get started, look around the garden together for plants that have produced full-sized seeds, such as beans, peas, corn, sunflowers and lettuce. Let the seeds dry on the plant for as long as possible and then, before any big rain falls, gather seeds from each plant. For beans and peas, pick off the pods. For corn, gather whole ears and for sunflowers take off entire flower heads. For lettuce, place a paper bag under the flowering stalk and shake to let the seeds fall in. Then, remove the beans and peas from the pods, place all of the seeds in a single layer on newspaper and allow them to dry in a warm room with plenty of airflow. Stir regularly to keep them from molding. Once they're dry, remove the corn from the cobs and the sunflower seeds from the flower. Store seeds in well marked, tightly sealed envelopes. Kids often enjoy decorating seed envelopes with pictures and information about the plants.
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- **Cleaning Up the Garden:** As the days become shorter and chillier, your summer plants will start to fade. It's time to pull them out and prepare your garden for winter. Remove all of the supports or trellises and all of the spent plants from your garden, and rake up any debris. Cover the ground in a layer of compost or composted manure. You can plant a cover crop such as rye, clover, buckwheat or bell beans, or let your garden rest until the spring. If you live in an area with mild winters, you can plant a fall garden with cool weather crops such as leafy greens, broccoli and peas.
- **Planting Bulbs:** In areas with cold winters, you can plant bulbs as long as the soil is soft enough to dig. Dig a hole about three times the diameter of the bulb. Mix some bone meal into the soil at the bottom of the hole and plant the bulb with the pointed side up. If you struggle with rodents, plant the bulbs in a cage made of hardware cloth, or stick with daffodils, which most animals avoid. Fill the hole with soil and water immediately. From then on, you should only need to worry about water if you're having an unusually dry winter. Come spring, your efforts should be colorfully rewarded!

November

Family Garden Activity: Harvest Centerpiece

Some of the most beautiful fall decorations come from the natural world. Set aside a space in your house to create a decorative harvest centerpiece. You might gather winter squash of various colors, dried leaves, pinecones, pumpkins, acorns or branches with red berries. Arrange with some candles to bring some of fall's beauty indoors.

Seasonal Recipes: Curry Winter Squash Soup

Makes 6-8 servings

Ingredients:

- 1 leek, white part only, chopped
- 1 large yellow or white onion, chopped
- $\frac{1}{8}$ cup olive oil
- 1 small pie pumpkin or medium-sized butternut, red kuri, or other winter squash (or 1 20-oz can of pumpkin puree)
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon curry powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ginger
- 1 bay leaf
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup coconut milk
- 1 bunch cilantro or chives

Steps:

1. If roasting your own pumpkin or winter squash: Preheat oven to 350°F. Cut the squash in half, scoop out the seeds and strings, and poke the skin a few times with a fork. Rub olive oil onto the cut edges and place cut edges down in a baking pan. Bake for about 45 minutes, until it's easy to push a fork into the flesh. Now you're ready to scoop the flesh out of the skin and use it in your soup.
2. Heat olive oil in a soup pot. Sauté the chopped onion and leek until clear, about 10 minutes.
3. Process the sautéed onion and leek with the baked squash in a food processor until smooth. (If you're using a blender instead of a food processor, add some of the broth as well so the mixture is able to blend.) Pour back into the soup pot.

4. Add the broth, salt and spices. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring often, then reduce the heat and simmer for 15 minutes, uncovered. Stir often.
5. Remove the bay leaf and stir in the coconut milk.
6. Stir over medium heat until the soup reaches a good serving temperature.
7. Serve garnished with chopped cilantro or chives.

Nutrition Tip:

Be sure to offer at least one fruit or vegetable at every meal or snack. Don't be discouraged if your children don't eat the fruit or vegetable you offer; it may take many times of seeing an item on their plates before they decide to taste it, and many times tasting it before they grow to like it. The best thing you can do is to consistently offer these items, without pressure to eat them.

Storybooks:

These are wonderful stories to read as you and your family delve into gardening and cooking together:

Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message, by Chief Jake Swamp

Stone Soup, by Heather Forest

Homeplace, by Anne Shelby

Pearl Plants a Tree, by Jane Breskin Zalben

Fall Gardening Tips:

- **Saving Seeds:** A great way for kids to learn about the life cycle of a plant is harvesting seeds from a fully-grown plant in the fall, then sowing those seeds and watching new plants emerge and grow in the spring. To get started, look around the garden together for plants that have produced full-sized seeds, such as beans, peas, corn, sunflowers and lettuce. Let the seeds dry on the plant for as long as possible and then, before any big rain falls, gather seeds from each plant. For beans and peas, pick off the pods. For corn, gather whole ears and for sunflowers take off entire flower heads. For lettuce, place a paper bag under the flowering stalk and shake to let the seeds fall in. Then, remove the beans and peas from the pods, place all of the seeds in a single layer on newspaper and allow them to dry in a warm room with plenty of airflow. Stir regularly to keep them from molding. Once they're dry, remove the corn from the cobs and the sunflower seeds from the flower. Store seeds in well marked, tightly sealed envelopes. Kids often enjoy decorating seed envelopes with pictures and information about the plants.
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thyme, and the like. Cut at least 6 inch stems and trim leaves from the bottom. Once you have enough of one herb to fill your hand, bind together with a rubber band. You may want to attach a label to the herb because they often look similar once dry. Hang herb bundles upside down in a warm, dry, dark place, such as a closet or garage. You may want to put an old sheet underneath the bundles to catch debris. If you don't have a dark area, you can also poke holes in paper bags and cover each bundle with a bag. Allow to dry for two weeks, and then store in airtight containers.

- **Cleaning Up the Garden:** As the days become shorter and chillier, your summer plants will start to fade. It's time to pull them out and prepare your garden for winter. Remove all of the supports or trellises and all of the spent plants from your garden, and rake up any debris. Cover the ground in a layer of compost or composted manure. You can plant a cover crop such as rye, clover, buckwheat or bell beans, or let your garden rest until the spring. If you live in an area with mild winters, you can plant a fall garden with cool weather crops such as leafy greens, broccoli and peas.
- **Planting Bulbs:** In areas with cold winters, you can plant bulbs as long as the soil is soft enough to dig. Dig a hole about three times the diameter of the bulb. Mix some bone meal into the soil at the bottom of the hole and plant the bulb with the pointed side up. If you struggle with rodents, plant the bulbs in a cage made of hardware cloth, or stick with daffodils, which most animals avoid. Fill the hole with soil and water immediately. From then on, you should only need to worry about water if you're having an unusually dry winter. Come spring, your efforts should be colorfully rewarded!

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December

Family Garden Activity: Growing Carrot Tops and Other Fun Things Indoors

The ground may be covered in snow, but that doesn't mean we have to stop with garden fun! Try one of these projects to keep your kids interested in gardening. You can plant carrot tops and watch them grow. Fill a dish with sand. Cut your carrots about an inch from the top and remove any greens. Place face down (cut-side down) in the dish and fill the dish with water. Place in a warm, sunny window, add water occasionally so that the carrot tops don't dry out, and watch the carrot tops grow new greens.

You can also sprout avocado pits. Simply stick toothpicks into the avocado and rest them on the rim of a cup with the pointy end of the pit facing up. Fill the cup with water so that only the bottom third of the pit is submerged. Keep in a sunny, light window and watch as roots emerge. Not all pits will sprout, but about one in three will. So you may want to try a handful of pits to ensure success.

Seasonal Recipes: Farmer's Cheese with Herbs

Makes roughly 1 pound of cheese

Ingredients:

1 gallon milk

½ to 1 cup apple cider vinegar

Optional: Garlic and/or your favorite fresh or dried herbs. Rosemary, oregano, thyme and chives all work well.

Special Equipment:

Very clean flour sack dish towel

Steps:

1. Bring the milk to a boil.
2. Turn off the heat and add the apple cider vinegar a little at a time, just until the milk curdles.
3. Let the mixture sit for 1-2 hours, then drain through a very clean dish towel.
4. Mix in garlic and herbs to taste. Enjoy!

Nutrition Tip:

If you normally use white flour in your baking, invest in some finely ground whole-wheat flour, and gradually start substituting it for the white flour. Start by replacing just one-fourth of your flour with whole wheat. Over time, increase the ratio of whole-wheat flour until you can eliminate white flour. Your family's taste buds can gradually adjust until they accept whole-wheat flour in everything from pizza crusts to cookies.

Storybooks:

These are wonderful stories to read as you and your family delve into gardening and cooking together:

The Vegetables We Eat, by Gail Gibbons

Oliver's Vegetables, by Vivian French

Eating the Alphabet, by Lois Ehlert

The Salamander Room, by Anne Mazer

Winter Gardening Tips:

- **Garden Planning:** Cold, dark winter days are an ideal time to start planning your spring garden. Head to a local garden center or go online to order a free seed catalog. Then, together with your kids, take time to browse through the possibilities. Once you've chosen plants to grow, you can use the information from the catalog or the back of your seed packets to figure out when each plant needs to be planted. From there, you can make a planting calendar that will guide you through the spring.
- **Building:** When the weather permits, winter is also a nice time to dive into infrastructure projects for your garden, such as building a planter box. Planter boxes and pots provide a great way to garden in small spaces, such as on rooftops, stoops or indoors. You can find building plans for planter boxes of all sizes at www.sunset.com/garden/fruits-veggies/small-space-salad-box-0040000011785/.
- **Composting:** Like a worm bin, a compost pile allows us to recycle food scraps and create fertile soil for the garden. For a compost pile, you need a 3' by 3' space outdoors, shovel, hose, lawn clippings, food scraps and a little soil. You can learn how to build a compost pile at www.csgn.org/csystgvideo.php?vid=1.
- **Recording the Weather:** Observing and recording the weather can be a fun family science project. Using a few simple tools, you can even create your own weather station! You can hang an outdoor thermometer in the shade to measure temperature. You can stick a yardstick in the snow and mark the starting level to measure snowfall overnight. By taping a ruler inside of a can and placing the can outdoors, you can create a simple rain gauge. You can hang a flag or windsock to measure wind direction. You can also note each day if it's sunny, partly cloudy or cloudy. Place all of these instruments in one outdoor area and you will have a weather station for daily observation and recording!