



Literacy Beds

Goals

The class will plan, plant, and grow a garden based on a piece of children's literature.

Curriculum Alignment

Find a list of which Common Core State Standards and NC Essential Standards this lesson plan aligns with on the lesson plan page at www.growing-minds.org.

Materials

Will depend on the garden you design.

Activities

Literacy beds are garden beds where you can literally grow a book! All it takes is a small garden bed (a raised bed, a plot of ground, or you could even manage with a large container), a little imagination, and a lot of fun.

Literacy beds are garden beds based on the information in a piece of children's literature. The beds include as many of the props, themes, and plants that figure prominently in the book.



Step 1: Select a piece of children's literature that incorporates a garden or growing food. There are suggestions listed below.

Step 2: Decide upon the props that you want to incorporate into your literacy bed. For example, if you were to "grow" Growing Vegetable Soup by Lois Ehlert, you could consider putting brightly painted garden tools (rake, shovel, hoe, trowel, spading fork) and other props mentioned (watering can, hand basket, bushel basket, pail) into your literacy bed. Maybe you want to use Lois' colors for each of the props (an orange and purple shovel is sure to delight children!). Don't feel like you have to purchase all these materials – either get your families to donate items or create the props yourself.

Step 3: Decide what you're going to grow. Using the same example, Growing Vegetable Soup, what is mentioned in the book? The book mentions plants that you can easily start from seeds (green beans, peas, corn, zucchini, carrots), plants that you don't grow by seed (potatoes, onions) and transplants (peppers, tomatoes, cabbage).

Step 4: Determine what can be grown at the time of year you are planting your literacy bed – if it's spring or fall, you can grow the cool weather items. If it's summer, you can grow warm weather veggies.



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Step 5: Have students draw or paint signs for the vegetables you are planting. Laminate or somehow weatherproof the signs so that you can use them as plant identification labels in the garden.

Some suggested books for creating literacy beds with your students:

Tops and Bottoms by Janet Stevens – This book is a lesson of parts of the foods we eat (roots, stems, leaves) and an enjoyable trickster tale. Props might include an Adirondack chair and foot stool, aluminum lawn chairs, and a wooden vegetable sign. You would plant: carrots, radishes, beets, lettuce, broccoli, celery, and corn.

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss – A thneed garden is a great opportunity for creative recycling (remember, thneeds are things you don't need). Plant seeds and transplants in old rusty buckets, old shoes, in anything you might salvage! These items could easily be brought from home by your children. You could also build a strange tree that would be the Truffala Tree.

Scarecrow by Cynthia Rylant – Props could include: scarecrows (create 'full size' scarecrows, or have students use popsicle sticks to make teeny scarecrows), the main scarecrow should include all the important elements (pie pan hands, suit, button eyes, hat, worm living in lapel). What you would grow: sunflowers, beans, pumpkins.

How Groundhog's Garden Grew by Lynne Cherry – What a romping garden you'd have if you planted everything in this book! Props could include: a squirrel, a groundhog, trellis, wren, praying mantises (buy these from a mail order and release in your garden), seed markers, small compost bin (easy to make out of chicken wire)...this one could keep you busy!

Growing Vegetable Soup by Lois Ehlert – Turn this into an author study as Ehlert also writes other books that you could include (Eating the Alphabet, Planting a Rainbow). Include brightly painted props in keeping with Ehlert's illustration style. Props: shovel, rake, hoe, gloves, seed packs, watering can, bushel basket, basket, pail, soup pot, ladle, hand grubber, spading fork.

Other books to consider: The Ugly Vegetables, Moonflower, Grandpa's Too Good Garden, Eddie's Garden and How to Make Things Grow, Growing Colors, Sunflower Sal, Ten Seeds, Scarlette Bean, Who's Garden Is It, What's This?, The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry and the Big Hungry Bear, Oliver's Vegetables, Harvest, And the Good Brown Earth, and Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!... have fun!