



# Gardening

## Adventures in Reading:

*Reading Adventure Packs from Reading Rockets*



Funded in part by the  
Park Foundation, Inc.

### Contents:

- Two books — one fiction, one nonfiction
- Parent information sheet
- Three activity sheets
- Bookmark
- Parent survey



# For teachers and librarians

*This Reading Rockets reading adventure pack is designed to support reading activities at home. We've chosen a fiction and nonfiction book about **gardening**, appropriate for a second and third grade listening level, and included related activities to encourage some hands-on fun and learning. Just assemble the packet and books in a two-gallon zip top bag, and send home with your students.*

When packing for this reading adventure about gardening we suggest you include **Weslandia** by Paul Fleischman and **Plant** (Eyewitness Books) by David Burnie. In **Weslandia**, Wesley's crop of huge, strange plants gives him the opportunity to create a civilization of his own and make new friends in the process. In **Plant**, detailed, full-color photographs complement the interesting facts about the fascinating world of plants, including plant anatomy and growth.

Reading Rockets carefully chose these titles because they are widely available in libraries and appealing to young readers. If they are not available, or you prefer other titles, substitute books related to the theme. You'll find more gardening titles included on the bookmark and at [www.worldcat.org/profiles/ReadingRockets/lists](http://www.worldcat.org/profiles/ReadingRockets/lists).

The parent information sheet includes an introductory note that you can personalize instructions about how to use the packet, and tips for sharing fiction and nonfiction books with children

The activities are designed to encourage further exploration and learning at home:

- Creativity Activity: a hands-on craft project
- Imagination Activity: encourages imaginative play, writing or drawing
- Get Real Activity: focuses on real-world experiences for parent and child
- The bookmark lists both the featured titles and additional titles

### Putting it all together

Print out copies of the parent information sheet, the activities, the survey, and a master for making bookmarks. Cut the bookmark page into strips. You may wish to print the activity pages and bookmark on card stock for durability.

Into a two-gallon zip top bag, place:

- Two books — one fiction and one nonfiction
- Parent information sheet
- Three themed activity pages
- Bookmark
- Survey for parents

Send the packet home with your student. Encourage parents to keep the parent information sheet, the activities and bookmark, and return the books and survey to you.

Let reading rockets know what you think of the family activity packets by e-mailing us through our website: [www.readingrockets.org/sitecontact](http://www.readingrockets.org/sitecontact). Click on "Reading Adventure Packs."

## START YOUR READING ADVENTURE!

# Welcome

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Exploring new ideas and enjoying books with you sends a powerful message to your child: Reading and learning are fun, and happen everywhere — not just at school. This Reading Rockets reading adventure pack about gardening was created to help you and your child enjoy reading and learning together.

Start your learning adventure by reading some books with your child about this popular topic. Then explore the topic with three activities. Enclosed you'll find what you need:

- How to use your reading adventure pack
- Two books to share with your child
- Three related activities
- Bookmark with a list of other books to extend the fun, if you wish
- Short survey to tell me if you enjoyed using the packet

The “how to” sheet, bookmark, this parent information sheet, and the activities are yours to keep.

When you've finished with the materials, please return the books and the completed survey to school in your child's backpack. Please return the Reading Rockets activity packet by \_\_\_\_\_ .

I hope you'll enjoy reading and learning together!

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Teacher signature

*To learn more about children's books, reading with your child, and information about helping kids become confident readers, please visit [www.ReadingRockets.org](http://www.ReadingRockets.org)*



**Reading Adventure Packs: Hands-on fun & learning from Reading Rockets**  
Find more themes and activities at [ReadingRockets.org/readingadventurepacks](http://ReadingRockets.org/readingadventurepacks)

# How to use your Reading Adventure Pack

## Getting ready

1. Before you read the books to your child, be sure to read them yourself.

One book is fiction — a “make-believe” story. The other book is nonfiction, or informational and true. Reading the books first will give you the “inside scoop” to the twists and turns of the story, the interesting information inside, and the parts of the books that will appeal most to your child.

2. Next, read the three activities to see which of them you think your child will enjoy most, and which one you have the time and materials on-hand to do right away. Chances are, after you read one (or both) of the books with your child, he or she may want to do an activity right away.

## Start the fun

3. When you know you’ll have at least enough time to read and talk about one of the books, grab your child and a book, and dive right in. Start with the fiction selection. Talk about the cover of the book with your child — can he guess what it is about? Have they ever read a book by the same author or illustrator or about the same topic?

Read the book to your child. If you are using the fiction title, you will be sharing a make-believe story. As you read and explore the pictures, you should note to your child that the author may include real facts in fiction writing. Talk with your child about how to confirm factual information found in works of fiction. Then, try the nonfiction book or one of the activities.

4. When you read the nonfiction book, take a moment to explain to your child the difference between the two types of books. The fiction book told a made-up, make-believe story, and a nonfiction book focuses on real people, places, and things. The information in nonfiction books can answer lots of questions and confirm facts.

5. Feel free to pick and choose from the activities, or change them to suit your child’s interests. Read the books again over the next few days and try different activities. Most important: have fun!

## When you’re done...

6. Keep the bookmark, the activities and this page. Complete the survey and return it with the books to your child’s school.

Make the most of the excitement the books create, and try some hands-on learning or make-believe fun. Exploring new ideas alongside you lets your child see you learning — and reading — too, and gives your child personal experiences to support her growing knowledge.

### Tips for reading nonfiction books with kids:

- Wonder out loud. As you are reading, or after talk about facts you find interesting or questions you have.
- Show your child how to use the table of contents, section headings, index and word list (glossary) to find answers to specific questions.
- Don’t be afraid to jump around, reading pages that especially interest your child. You don’t have to read a nonfiction book straight through.

### Tips for reading fiction books with kids:

- Take your time and talk about the story with your child. Ask your child questions.
- Explore the pictures with your child.
- Read with expression. Change your voice or how fast you read to create excitement. Ham it up!
- You don’t need to read every word. Keeping your child interested is the goal.



# Bottom of the barrel



You can grow practically anything in a container. And as long as it holds soil, drains water, and is large enough for the plants you're growing, you can use practically anything as a container. Search with your child for unique containers or hunt for items like beads, buttons, shells, and stones to beautify cans or plastic food containers.

Depending on imagination and what you find, your child might create a tea party garden by planting flowers in an old teakettle or turn a toddler wading pool into a pizza garden by planting basil, oregano, tomato, green onion and bell peppers in triangular "slices."

Your child can also repurpose some food containers for a kitchen herb garden. Here's what you'll need:



© Camden Children's Garden (Camden, NJ)

## Supplies

- Empty, clean cans (make sure there are no sharp edges) or quart-size plastic food containers
- Hammer, nail and glue
- Things to glue on the container (fabric scraps, beads, buttons, shells, stones, stickers, etc.)
- Potting soil
- Seeds (chives, parsley and peppermint grow well indoors)
- Small gardening trowel
- Spray bottle for water
- Watertight tray or saucer to place under the planters

## Getting started

1. Clean the containers with hot, soapy water and dry.
2. Use the hammer and nail to puncture several drainage holes in the bottom of the container.
3. Let your child start decorating! While he's designing and gluing, talk about the books you read together. What does he remember about what plants need to grow? What's his plan to make sure his plants have those things?
4. When he's finished decorating, let the containers dry overnight. Have him fill the containers with potting soil and read the planting directions on the seed packets aloud so you can follow them together. Be sure to include some kind of label to remember what was planted in each pot. Water thoroughly using the spray bottle.
5. Help your child find a warm, sunny place to watch his herbs to grow!

**Variation:** If you've already got a garden planted, add some garden art with painted rock garden markers. Have your child collect some interesting flat stones, paint and decorate, and add words that identify the flowers and vegetables in the garden.



# Seeds the day

Starting plants from seeds is exciting! Your child will be fascinated to see what emerges from a tiny seed and take pride in nurturing her plants. Your child can start her seeds in any small container with a drainage hole, but she'll have fun planting in starter pots she makes herself from toilet paper roll tubes.

## Supplies

- A collection of cardboard toilet paper roll tubes and/or paper towel roll tubes
- Scissors
- Seed-starting mix or soil mix
- Tablespoon
- Seeds (easy-to-grow: marigolds, zinnias, tomatoes, peppers, chives and basil)
- Spray bottle for water
- Watertight trays (reuse clean carryout containers or Styrofoam trays)

Talk with you child about what she'd like to plant. Did the books you read together give her any ideas? Talk also about how many seeds to plant. You'll need a starter pot for each seed.

## Getting started

Each toilet paper roll tube will make two starter pots. To make the pots:

1. Cut the roll in half.
2. Take one half and cut four ½ inch slits evenly spaced around the bottom of the tube. You should now have four tabs. 
3. Fold tabs in to create the bottom of the pot. Start with all tabs up, push any one down then continue in one direction pushing tabs in. The corner of the fourth tab needs to get tucked under the first — just like closing a cardboard box. 
4. Set the pots in the watertight trays and use a tablespoon to fill them not quite to the top with soil mix.
5. Follow the directions on seed packets for planting depth\* and plant the seeds! Gently soak the soil with water using the spray bottle.
6. Make labels to identify which seeds are in which pots. Seedlings look a lot alike!
7. Find a good space to provide seeds with light and warmth and that is easy for your child to reach to watch and water her plants. (Keep in mind that windowsills can be cold places, especially at night.)

While you're waiting for seeds to grow, research and read more about plant care, especially how and when to transplant and how to harden off seedling before planting them outside.

\* If your seeds require greater planting depth, use the entire tube for the pot instead of cutting it in half.



# A place in the sun

Maps describe where things are located and what you'll find there. You can make a map to explain just about anything about any place.

What would a map of the garden in the fiction title you read together look like? Encourage your child to use his imagination to pretend to fly over the garden you read about. Have him draw what he "sees" and create an aerial view of the garden's layout. Suggest he include:

- A map title that explains what the map shows
- Grid lines (or use graph paper)
- A scale to explain distance
- A legend or key to explain colors and symbols used on the map
- Geographic features or important landmarks
- Any interesting details from the story

Have your child explain his map to you. Talk about which details he chose to include and why he felt those elements were important to the characters or to the story. Ask him what is or would be important to him to include in a garden of his own.

Then help your child design a garden map for his very own garden. Gardeners make and use maps to plan what, where and when to plant. You'll need to think and talk about:

- If this is a real or imaginary garden (if you can't plant, it is still fun to imagine and plan)
- Climate zones (what plants grow well where you live)
- Where your plants would find sun or shade
- What kind of space (yard, balcony, deck, patio, porch, stoop) or containers you have
- How much space you have for your garden (use a tape measure to find out)
- What's already in or near the space (the house, patio, deck, paths, driveway, existing plants and lawn)

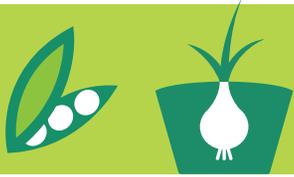
Head outside and have your child draw a picture (aerial view if possible) of your current space. After he's finished his sketch, talk about what he wants to grow and decide where you both would want the garden to go. Be sure to talk about things like flower heights and colors or how much room a tomato plant will need to grow.

Have your child add the garden plan details to his sketch, and then save his garden map to help with planting when the time is right. Then after planting, include his map in a garden journal to help your child can remember what was planted and where. He can also add new details to the map as the garden grows, such as insects found and amounts of foods harvested.

With his map and journal, he'll have a great resource for planning next year's garden!



# GARDENING



## Fiction

*The Garden of Happiness*  
by Erika Tamar

*The Gardener* by Sarah Stewart

*How Groundhog's Garden Grew*  
by Lynne Cherry

*I Heard It From Alice Zucchini: Poems  
About the Garden* by Juanita Havill

*The Ugly Vegetables* by Grace Lin

*Weslandia* by Paul Fleischman

*Whose Garden Is It?* by Mary Ann  
Hoberman

## Nonfiction

*From Seed to Plant* by Gail Gibbons

*The Gardening Book* by Jane Bull

*The Kids Can Press Jumbo Book of  
Gardening* by Karyn Morris

*The Magic School Bus Plants Seeds*  
by Joanna Cole

*My Backyard Garden* by Carol Lerner

*Plant (Eyewitness Books)*  
by David Burnie

*Ready Set Grow!* by DK Publishing

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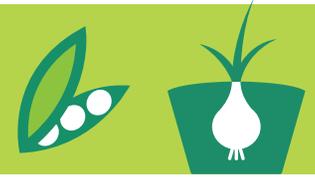
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