

Year-round School Gardening Activities

Debra Spielmaker, Associate Professor

Utah State University Extension – Agriculture in the Classroom

debra.spielmaker@usu.edu

www.agclassroom.org/ut

www.utahgardennetwork.org

Curriculum Resources

National Gardening Curriculum Package

- *10 Terrific Vegetables* provides cultural connections, lesson ideas, and gardening basics.
- *My Gardening Journal* (10 copies) lets children keep a record of their observations.
- *Growing Ventures* describes how educators nationwide have helped youth develop plant-based entrepreneurial programs.
- *Schoolyard Mosaics* features garden plans and demonstrates how gardens can be used to create an integrated curriculum.
- *Steps to a Bountiful Kids' Garden* helps leaders plan, launch, and sustain an effective school gardening program.
- *The Growing Classroom* offers garden-based science and nutrition instruction.
- *Math in the Garden* uses a mathematical lens to take children on an educational, activity-filled exploration of the garden.



Junior Master Gardener

- JMG Teacher/Leader Guide/Handbook
- Literature in the Garden
- More on www.jmgkids.us



Other Resources

- Utah Agriculture in the Classroom www.agclassroom.org/ut
- Food, Land & People: http://www.foodlandpeople.org/Order_CD
- *Grow it Again* book by Elizabeth MacLeod
- *Green Thumbs* activity book by Laurie Carlson
- *Kids' Container Gardening* by Cindy Krezel



Indoor or Outdoor Monthly Gardening Activity Ideas

September

- Assemble Grow Lab; order any other materials.
- Get to know high school FFA or local Extension educators that may help with your gardening project.
- Consider types of plants to grow, both indoor for holidays or in outdoor garden in the spring. Use “Inch by Inch, Row by Row” lesson plan, *The Growing Classroom, Garden-Based Science*.
- Start houseplant cuttings for Thanksgiving gifts in *Grow Lab* to be made into topiary, *Grow it Again*.
- Begin outdoor garden site: soil, water, fence, etc.
- Talk about and record daily weather (temperature and precipitation) on calendar. Use the “Degrees Count” lesson plan, *The Growing Classroom, Garden-Based Science*.
- Discuss what plants are doing this time of year as directed in the “Seasons Through the Year” lesson plan *Food, Land and People, Resources for Learning CD*. The season circle can be used throughout the school year.
- Use “Me and the Season” lesson plan *The Growing Classroom, Garden-Based Science*.
- Read Johnny Apple Seed. Make applesauce, *Junior Master Gardener, Teacher/Leader Guide, page 149*.
- Collect a soil sample to send out or conduct a soil test in your classroom using the *Topsoil Tour* lab kit. Have the class make a fertilizer recommendation.
- Create “Collector’s Corner” about seasons, *The Growing Classroom, Garden-Based Science*.
- Tour a local garden or garden center.

October:

- Soak some bean seeds and dissect to identify the parts. Dissect a pine nut; the “baby” tree is very interesting.
- Experiment with bean seeds using the “Power Seeds” activity, *Junior Master Gardener, Teacher/Leader Guide, page 16*.
 - Discuss what seeds need to sprout or germinate (warmth, air/oxygen, water)
 - Start seeds in viewable germination container, [ragdoll/paper towel](#) (10 seeds/ragdoll), [Living Necklaces](#) (2-4 seeds/bag), [Farming in a Glove](#) (10 seeds/glove), [Germinator](#) (4-5 seeds/case). The paper towel, cotton ball(s), and coffee filter hold the water or moisture for germination.
- Discuss what plants need to grow and thrive to reach maturity: optimum temperature (usually warm depending on the plant), water (moisture), a growth media to anchor roots (soil), nutrients (in the soil or added to the soil, compost or other fertilizer), air, sunlight, and growing space. Use “Plant Needs” activity, *Junior Master Gardener, Teacher/Leader Guide, page 11*.
- Plant sprouted seeds in milk cartons or other containers (mentioned in *Grow Lab* handbook) and discuss the cycle of a plant’s life.
- Carve pumpkins and use pumpkin art/science activity, “[The Great Pumpkin](#).”
- Questions for the month:
 - *What is a seed?*
 - *What does “germinate” mean?*
 - *What does a seed need to sprout?*

November

- If soil is workable, plant lettuce and spinach outdoors, or start seeds indoors.
- Provide students with a magnifying glass and ask them to discuss the differences between garden soil and potting/seed starting soil.
- Use It's As Simple As One, Two, Three...Four lesson plan, *The Growing Classroom, Garden-Based Science*.
- Sprout alfalfa seeds for salad using jar method outlined in the *Grow Lab handbook page 23*.
- Discuss why light is important for plants, *Grow Lab, page 44*.
- Make guacamole and start an avocado plant. *Grow Lab, page 69, and Grow it Again, page 32-33*.
- Try growing some ginger, *Grow it Again, page 38*.
- Read Big Book *Vegetable Garden*.

December

- Discuss plant watering and plant food or fertilizer and how to determine when to water and fertilize plants, *Grow Lab, page 46-49, Green Thumbs, page 5*.
- Use the "From Chicken to Omelets, Tomatoes to Ketchup" lesson plan, *Food, Land and People, Resources for Learning CD*.
- Watch movie [Food Doesn't Grow in the Supermarket](#)
- Make a Tool Tote, *Grow it Again, page 7*.

January

- Begin working on [Garden Show](#) musical.
- Make a watering can and scoop, *Grow it Again, page 9*.
- Make a flower press, *Grow it Again, page 110-111*.
- Discuss Earthworms. Use "[Working Worms](#)" lesson from [Dirt: Secrets in the Soil](#), and learn [Earthworm Songs](#).
- Read *Little Red Hen*, use a [wheat grinder and wheat seeds](#) (Utah teachers can borrow this item) to make [bread](#) or [tortillas](#) in a bag.

February

- Work on Garden Show musical.
- Create some compost, *Grow it Again, page 17*.
- Start a potato garden, *Grow it Again, page 92 and Grow Lab, page 68*.
- Force garden bulbs, *Grow it Again, page 85*.
- Read *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens.

March

- Read *Sunflower House* by Eve Bunting.
- Present Garden Show musical for school and parents.
- Begin planting garden vegetable seedlings, planting guide, *Grow Lab, page 22*. Tomatoes can wait until March 1; marigolds might be nice for Mothers Day. Use seed starting media and sew directly into 4-pak pony.
- Vegetable tasting and what part of the plant am I eating, *Junior Master Gardener, Teacher/Leader Guide, page 148*. Begin working soil and adding amendments if necessary.

April

- If weather allows, begin planting outdoors some cold tolerant seeds/plants (depending on what you have decided to grow and hardy perennial herbs), *Grow Lab, page 24*.
- Create “Plant Pounding,” *Junior Master Gardener, Teacher/Leader Guide, page 65*, or do flower pressing, *Grow it Again, page 37*.
- Good Bugs and Bad Bugs, *Junior Master Gardener, Teacher/Leader Guide, page 102-104*. *Grow it Again, page 53-56*.
- Use “Transplanting, or Let’s Move ‘Em Out!” lesson plan, *The Growing Classroom, Garden-Based Science*.
- Cook with Kids, *Grow it Again*.

May

- Finish planting outdoors (sunflowers, squash, pumpkin, corn, beans, cucumbers, etc.) Plant all seedling transplants (peppers, tomatoes).
- Read *The Summer My Father Was Ten* by Pat Brisson.
- Weed and discuss weeds, *Grow it Again, page 41*.
- Plan summer Garden Team schedule.

Summer

Set up a School Garden Club that meets once a week; share the load with other teachers or volunteers.

Suck a bug, *Junior Master Gardener, Teacher/Leader Guide, page 87*.

Insect and other pest problems, *Grow Lab, page 58*.

Go on a Garden or Garden Center Field Trip.