



YCS Farm to School Committee

School Garden Curriculum

Kindness in the Garden*

Overview

Gardening programs offer many opportunities for youth to practice showing kindness to each other, to their community, and to our planet. Use this lesson to inspire your students to brainstorm and perform an act of kindness through your school garden.

Grade Level

PK-2

Objective

Students will use the garden as a tool for expressing kindness and compassion

Time

This will vary depending on the act of kindness that is chosen

Materials

This will vary depending on the act of kindness chosen

Choose a garden-related book that shows the idea of promoting kindness through gardening. Here are a few suggestions:

- *If You Plant a Seed* by Kadir Nelson
- *A Place to Grow* by Stephanie Bloom
- *Wanda's Roses* by Pat Brisson
- *A Shadow Garden* by Cherie Foster Colburn

Background Information

Youth garden programs offer many opportunities for gardeners to show kindness, compassion, and empathy. The harvest of the garden can be shared, the beauty of a garden space can offer peace, and the skills learned through gardening can be used to help others. Drawing from the concept of pay it forward, by which a person who has received a gift repays it by giving a gift to another instead of the original donor, use this lesson to inspire your young gardeners this year to plant it forward

Procedure

Select a book to read and discuss with your class.

If You Plant a Seed by Kadir Nelson.

What do you get when you plant tomato, carrot, and cabbage seeds? Tomato, carrot, and cabbage plants.

What happened when the rabbit and the mouse refused to share their harvest with the birds? They ended up fighting and ruining all the fruits and vegetables.

What happened when the rabbit and mouse shared their harvest with the birds? The birds were grateful and they helped sow additional plants for an even bigger harvest for everyone.

What does the author say is the sweetest fruit? The fruit of kindness.

Did the rabbit and mouse receive benefits from being kind? Yes.

A Place to Grow by Stephanie Bloom.

In the book, the Tiny Seed is on a journey looking for a place to grow. How is Tiny Seed feeling on his journey? Scared, worried, anxious, frustrated.

Does anyone try to comfort him along the way? The Big Tree, The Wind.

How do they try to help? The Big Tree assures him he will find a place to grow and to enjoy his journey. The Wind carries him away from the places where he does not belong and also provides words of encouragement to him.

Does anyone treat him poorly along his journey? The ant thinks he is a pebble, the cow tries to eat him, the vegetables are mean because he is not exactly like them.

How did the seed feel when the vegetables were mean to him? He was very sad and beginning to lose hope that he would find his place.

What kind of things did the meadow provide for the Tiny Seed? Sunlight, water, moist soil.

Explain to your students that compassion is wanting to help when someone needs it. Which of the characters in this story were compassionate? The Big Tree and The Wind.

How did they show their compassion? Through their words and actions

Wanda's Roses by Pat Brisson.

Why did Wanda begin cleaning up an empty lot in her neighborhood? She wanted to make room for a “rosebush.”

How did all of the neighbors react to her cleaning the lot? They all pitched in and helped even though they did not think her plant was actually a rosebush.

What did Wanda do when her bush did not bloom? She made flowers from paper and invited the neighbors who had helped her to a tea to celebrate.

What happened at the tea party? Everyone brought rose bushes because they wanted to help and soon the lot was a beautiful rose garden.

In this book, the neighbors worked together to make a beautiful space. Ask students to share examples from their own lives where they have worked with others to get big projects done.

The Shadow Garden by Cherie Foster Colburn.

In The Shadow Garden, the main character’s grandmother is not feeling well and cannot go out into her garden because being in the sun made her feel sick. What did he and his grandfather try to do first to make her feel better? They gave her cards and letters, read books to her, and made her tea.

What did they decide to try next? They decided she missed her garden and so they planted a garden that she could enjoy at night.

What kind of things did they include in the garden? Plants that bloom at night. Lights on the trees.

In addition to plants, what also lived in the shadow garden? Birds, crickets, moths, a raccoon.

How did his grandmother feel about her garden? It made her very happy.

Did the young child and his/her grandfather know how to help his grandmother at first? No, they tried many things.

How do you think they came up with the idea of a shadow garden? Perhaps they tried to think about her favorite things before she got sick and then came up with an idea on how to adapt it considering her new limitations.

After reading and discussing the story, ask your students to brainstorm ways they can use their school garden to show kindness to others. Ideas will vary depending on what your school garden looks like and what is available during the season. Possible ideas to consider:

- Collect and save seeds from your garden to donate to other youth or community garden programs or home gardeners. Learn more about harvesting and preserving seeds.
- Donate a portion of your harvest to a local food bank or shelter. Read about an awesome, inspirational program called Katie's Krops: <http://www.katieskrops.com/>
- Host a garden party and invite school neighbors or another classroom to enjoy your garden space with you.
- Invite another classroom to read books with your class in the garden
- Gather garden items and let the students create an art project with what they found. They can share their project with family at home
- Use your garden to enhance the local environment in your community. Build a rain garden and decrease pollution from storm water runoff, plant trees and improve air quality, or install native plants to provide habitats for wildlife.
- Host a clean-up day in your school garden. Have your young gardeners use their new gardening skills to help weed and prune the garden.

After initial brainstorming, create a chart of your favorite ideas and estimate the cost and time associated with each. Which of your ideas do you have the resources to accomplish? Plan and carry out your act of kindness.

Evaluation

Ask students to consider if they also receive benefits when they are kind. Share an example of when you were kind and received a benefit and then let them share examples if they want. Make sure to explain that the benefits do not need to be "things," and that the best reward is feeling good because you were able to help.

Ask students to write about the act of kindness they performed to document and analyze the experience. Answer the questions: What did you do? How did you make a difference? How did it make you feel?

Extension Activity

Using the books listed as inspiration, ask students to draw a picture, create a class book or write their own book about kindness using the garden or nature as the setting. Host a book reading to share with family and friends.

Virtual Options

- For students who have access to a garden area at their home ask them to brainstorm ideas for acts of kindness they can do in the garden with their family. Many of the above suggestions can be done on a smaller scale
- For students who do NOT have access to a garden area ask them to write a story or draw a picture about what act of kindness they would do if they had a garden.

*lesson adapted from kidsgardening.org