

Library Lines – Ruth Gilbert, Youth Services Librarian, Kirkland Town Library

Every year at about this time I get really inspired to plan and plant a garden. I stare out the window into my backyard and see the gorgeous possibilities: pristine, overflowing flower beds swarming with bees and butterflies; raised beds full of fat tomatoes, crunchy beans, and fragrant herbs. I read gardening books and blogs. I peruse seed catalogs and sketch out plans. I make lists of plants to look for at gardening centers.

But by mid-June, I make peace with having just a few potted plants and the perennials I managed to get into the ground a few years ago. The perimeter of my yard will still be overrun with goutweed and I still will have no idea what the pH of my soil is. I don't have as much time for a garden as I wish I did, so this probably isn't the year I transform my yard into an English garden. But I can keep planning and dreaming. There's always next year.

If you're feeling similarly inspired, the Kirkland Town Library has lots of resources for every level of gardener, including the very youngest. We have a large collection of gardening books for adults as well as books and kits for children and families.

We also have seeds! Our annual seed exchange offers heirloom vegetable, flower, and herb seeds, free of charge. We have several varieties of peppers, tomatoes, lettuce, squash, beans, and more. Just stop in to make your selection. At the end of the season you can gather seeds from your harvest and donate them back to the library for next year's seed exchange.

If you're looking for ways to involve kids in your planting activities, check out our Portable Bookshelf bag on gardening. Portable Bookshelf bags each contain a handful of nonfiction books for older children on specific topics like the human body, art, transportation, or gardening. You get a preselected bag of books, ready to go.

We also offer Storytime-to-Go bags, which provide three books, suggested songs, and a toy or puppet related to a theme. They're perfect for having your own storytime at home. And the "Growing Things" bag is great for preschoolers interested in learning more about gardening through fun stories. It even includes toy gardening tools.

Our children's book collection also has some very useful titles for families looking for easy ways to give gardening a try, and you don't have to have kids to appreciate these books. They're great for any novice gardener who isn't quite sure where to start.

"Easy Peasy Gardening for Kids" by Kirsten Bradley is beautifully illustrated and full of manageable, practical projects to introduce children to gardening. There are instructions for growing vegetables indoors, making newspaper seedling pots, and planting a pollinator pot. You'll also find background information on pollination and gardening maintenance.

"Grown Your Own For Kids" by Chris Collins and Lia Leendertz is another book of kid-friendly garden projects, like growing a "strawberry fountain" or "monster pumpkin." It also touches on the basics of setting up the garden, what tools you'll need, and recommendations for the simplest and tastiest things to grow. The projects are easy and inspiring for all ages.

Whether you grow something in a pot or transform your outdoor space into a flowering oasis, I hope you reap the rewards and pleasures of growing something yourself. And if you need them, the library's resources are here to help!