

Presents ...

# Branching Out

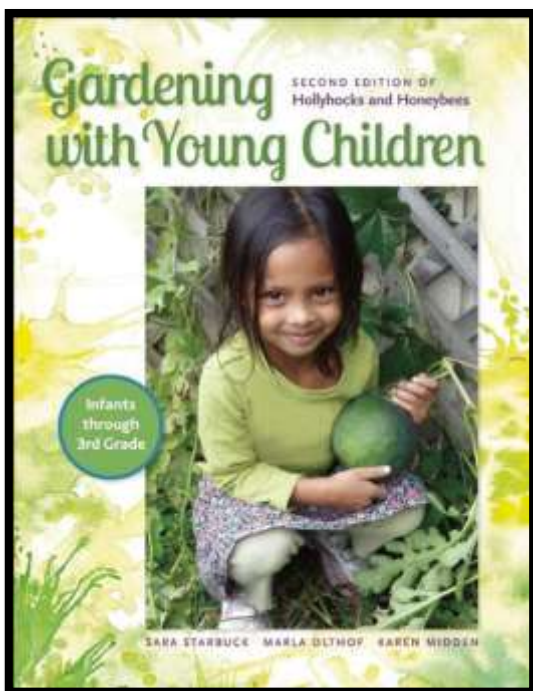
Resource Updates to Support the Growth and Goals of Educators



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During this time of physical distancing it seems that flower gardens are popping up everywhere! There's no better way to connect with nature and spread joy through your neighbourhood than by creating beautiful masterpieces in your front yard. We are also starting to see vegetable gardens sprout up! Being able to plant, grow, and tend to your own vegetable garden provides a sense of accomplishment as well as nutritious additions to your dinner table. Now imagine sharing that joy and accomplishment with children! Here are some resources to help support gardening with young children.

## Resource Books Available for Borrowing



### Gardening with Young Children

This book encourages early childhood professionals to garden with children and provides information on why and how to incorporate gardening projects in any learning environment. It also explains the expansive learning opportunities that come with gardening.



### How to Grow Organic Vegetables in Containers (Anywhere!)

Using simple directives and annotated photographs, you can follow step-by-understandable-step on seed set-up, transplanting, cultivation, fertilizers, composting and harvest. Also included is a glossary of commonly used terms, advice on pests, recommended tools, and resources.



## Provocation for Learning Kits Available for Borrowing



### Exploring How to Grow a Garden through Storytelling Experiences

This kit includes children's literature and some great hands-on learning materials to spark children's curiosity about gardening and support emergent literacy.



### Garden Party Attire

Once you have that beautiful garden planted and it is in full bloom, what better way is there to celebrate it than with a (physically distanced) Garden Party? This supplementary kit has everything you need for the children to get dressed-up for the occasion.



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## Farr Out Findings

Gardening has been known to support the well-being of many people across the world, including children. The question, however, is what can we do to plant the seeds of interest in gardening for children?

Begin with probing conversation and exploration. As children come to school with a natural sense of curiosity, it is the educator that takes on the responsibility of ensuring there are endless opportunities for the children to ask questions, explore, solve problems, and engage with their environment. Through meaningful conversation and developing learning experiences focused on exploration with the children, the educator gains a valuable understanding of what the children know/are curious about. The educator can then use these observations to support the creation of a variety of authentic learning experiences to expand children's thinking on gardening.

Listed below are a few ideas of play-based learning experiences that can support children's inquiry in gardening:

- Dramatic play with gardening tools
- Providing books on gardening
- Going on nature walks with children

For example, these images from a nature walk I took can be used as a provocation to begin the conversation of nature and gardening with children.



What do you think will sprout from these plants?



How many flowers do you think will bloom? Why do you think that?



Where have you seen something like this before?



What can you tell me about these flowers?



## Check out ECCDC's YouTube Channel

We recently added a video of our Summer Intern, Emily Farr, and ECCDC Staff Member, Jenn Mosher, challenging each other in creating activities using Natural Loose Parts found in their neighbourhoods. [Click here](#) to have a look, share with your colleagues, and subscribe to our channel!



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## The Learning Report with Alison Hansen

The ECCDC's Student Intern **Alison Hansen** had the opportunity to support and participate in the *"Connecting to Natural Living Systems & Food Gardens for Wellness"* webinar recently offered by Garden Jane Hayes and this is what she had to share.



An interesting activity that Garden Jane presented was creating fairy gardens. Jane explained that the purpose is about taking care of the garden and creating something that will invite the fairies in. I thought this would be a great activity for us to explore as it is something children can do quite easily with a little bit of support and is a great way to use natural loose parts! Children can create houses, chairs, hammocks, etc., with the things they find outside on walks and in their gardens. Another fun part of this activity is filling a spray bottle or dropper with water and labelling it as fairy mist. Children can spray the fairy mist to their hearts' content, and they will be watering their fairy garden!

Another interesting activity Garden Jane introduced to participants was finding a "sit spot". In this activity, you find a spot outside or a space where you can look out a window and observe for a few minutes. This activity is great for both adults and children to help them connect with nature and relax for a few minutes. If you are doing this activity with a child, while observing them you can ask what they see, hear, feel, and even smell.



Garden Jane also gave some general tips for people who say they have a "black thumb". Number one was not to say that in the first place, because even though she is a gardener she has killed plenty of plants, so don't be discouraged! The more you plant the more you will learn about how to figure out what plants need. In her sprouting demonstration for peas she gave even more tips on how to get started on a simple plant. She suggested soaking them for about 24 hours and then planting them with regular potting soil in a container with some drainage holes in the bottom. Her rule of thumb is whatever size seed you plant, it should be planted about three times the depth, and don't worry about spacing them too far apart. Once planted and covered with soil, water them and keep them covered with plastic wrap or an upside-down plastic container while they start to germinate. This will keep them moist, and soon you will have pea shoots you can eat!

Happy gardening and connecting with nature!

If you would like to learn more about Garden Jane please visit her website [by clicking here](#)

The ECCDC is pleased to have Garden Jane sharing her expertise in two upcoming sessions! Please [click here](#) for more information.



## Free Resources Available on our E-store

In April 2018, the ECCDC welcomed Rusty Keeler, who shared his expertise on Creating Outdoor Play Environments for the Soul in an amazing hands-on session held at the beautiful Balls Falls Conservation Area in Jordan, Ontario. Today we are pleased to share this downloadable resource **20 Ways to Create Play Environments for the Soul** free on our E-store. [Click here to check it out.](#)



## Did you know...

Gardens provide children with opportunities to:

- play & inquire;
- take safe risks;
- develop diverse relationships;
- develop community;
- invite and uncover diversity; and
- widen social views.

In addition, did you know that edible gardens present benefits to children as well such as:

- the process of harvesting;
- introduction to new foods; and
- awareness of regional foods?

## References

Dietz, B., & Kashin, D. (2018). Outdoor and Nature Play in Early Childhood Education.

