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Opening extract from

Nature's Day

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Kay Maguire trained at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and has been writing and making films about gardening and wildlife ever since. She writes for magazines and websites and is the author of the award-winning RHS *How to Grow Your Own Crops in Pots*. She is lucky enough to live and work in one of London's amazing Royal Parks, where she loves growing her own food, cycling and walking the dog with her kids.

Danielle Kroll is a Brooklyn-based artist and designer. She graduated from Tyler School of Art and proceeded to work in Anthropologie's art department. Currently, she spends her days working on a variety of projects, from illustration to textiles to design. No matter what the job is, everything Danielle creates is hand-done and made with love. Her whimsical style aims to inspire curiosity and to make your day just a little bit brighter.

Introduction

Nature is everywhere – living, breathing and growing, right under your nose. From the birds in the trees, to the mushrooms in the wood, the tadpoles in the pond and the spider in the railings at the end of your street, nature is all around you. You just need to stop a minute and look.

As the year changes from season to season, the insects, plants and animals you see change too. In spring the temperatures rise and the days get a little longer, buds burst into leaf, the first flowers blossom and hibernating animals stir, knowing that finally there is food to be found. New life can be born. As the days get warmer and longer still, the sun shines and summer is here! Flowers everywhere bloom, fruits ripen and birds and animals fill their days feeding their young. The days go by and the weather starts to change again. Days are cooler and shorter, and with less light from the sun, the last flowers fade and turn to seed. Berries appear and animals and birds feast on the autumn harvest, preparing for the cold weather and the lack of food ahead. Then, finally, the weather turns to ice, plants start to die and the lean days of winter arrive. All is still as the plants and the animals hide from the cold, dark days – until suddenly, the ice melts, the sun shines and the flowers begin to bloom. A whole year has passed and it's spring again!

The year has come full circle and each beautiful season will keep on coming, again and again, with its own unique and wonderful things to see. This book will help you find those things and to discover the world of wonder that is on your doorstep.

After a long, cold winter nature is finally stirring! Every day it gets warmer and the days get a little brighter and longer. Buds open, shoots sprout and early flowers burst into bloom. As the soil gets warmer, spring bulbs push up through the ground and newly-sown seeds germinate and begin to grow.

Spring is a season of new beginnings. Lambs are born and skip happily in the fields, rabbits leave their burrows and birds arrive and start to build nests, singing as they work. The world is waking up! So stop for a moment and look around you.

The World Awakes

The garden is a wonderful place in spring as everything, at last, begins to grow and flower. On warmer days we can go outside and explore: smell the sweet scent of the shrubs and trees in bloom, peer under stones and look for centipedes, worms and woodlice and watch the first bees buzz around the flowers. When you wake up early in the morning, lie still and close your eyes so you can hear the birds. The garden can be a noisy place in spring!

The dawn chorus is loudest in spring as many birds try to attract a mate by singing.

The chorus gets louder and louder as more birds add their chirps, whistles and warbles to the song.

Can you hear the birds singing, greeting the dawn? Day after day they repeat this song, which is called the dawn chorus.

Tweet tweet! Tweet tweet!

Birds sing at dawn to claim their territories and to let other birds know where they are.

Birds mate in spring when it is warm and there is lots of food around for their chicks.

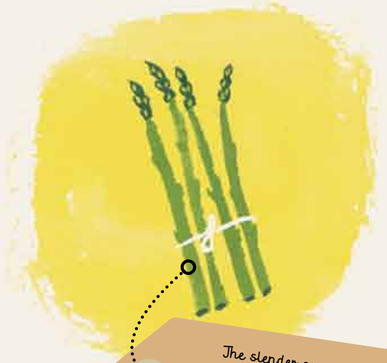
The low light at dawn makes it a bad time for birds to forage for food, but a good time to make a lot of noise without getting caught by predators!

Tweet tweet! Tweet tweet!

The same birds start the chorus every day. Robins, blackbirds and song thrushes are some of the first to sing.

Salad Days

Spring is the busiest time in the vegetable patch with seeds being sown and the first crops ready to harvest. The soil is warmer now, the perfect temperature for seeds to start sending out shoots. As the land wakes up, weeds also start to appear and need to be cleared away. The soil is raked and watered, ready for the new seeds to be sown.

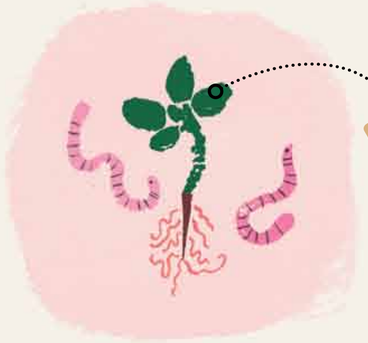


The slender green spikes of asparagus poke up through the soil and stretch, waiting to be cut and eaten with a crunch.

Give the long pink stalks of rhubarb a tug, cut off the leaves and they are ready to go in a yummy pie or crumble.

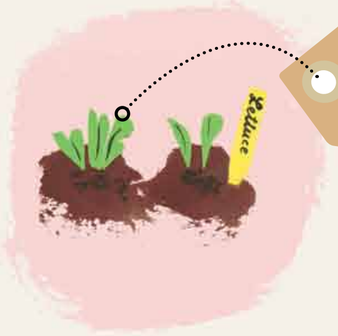
Potatoes are planted now, buried deep in the earth with their little knobbly shoots ready to start growing.

It's seed sowing time! Make a hole or draw a line with your finger and sprinkle them in. Then give them a drink and wait for new green shoots to appear.



Weeds grow quickly and produce lots of seeds very fast. Pull them out before they cover the crops and stop them from growing. Look out for worms wiggling through the soil!

Bees are abuzz around the white flowers of strawberries, drinking their nectar and pollinating as they go. Watch the yellow centres of each flower. Soon the petals will fall and what remains will swell and redden into plump, juicy strawberries.

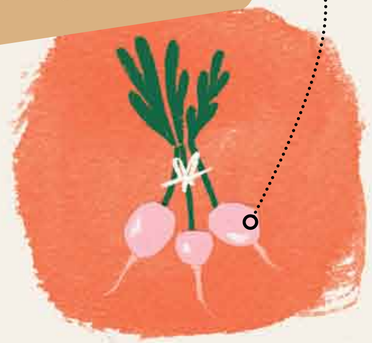


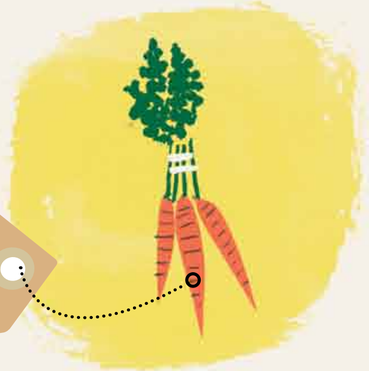
The first fresh, green lettuce leaves will be ready to pick soon and eat in an early spring salad.

Slugs and snails love spring – there are plenty of fresh, young leaves for them to eat. Follow their slimy, glistening trails or look for holes in leaves; they won't be far away!

See the long, thin leaves like perfect green tubes? Spring onions are swelling just beneath the ground.

Pull the leafy tuft of a radish and find the marbles of red and white below.





Below fine, feathery leaves, bright orange carrots are reaching down through the soil.