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I reading

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opening extract from

Green Fingers and Muddy Boots

written by

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Introduction





So you want to be a gardener?

Looking after an area in which you grow flowers, fruit or vegetables is known as 'gardening'. It includes taking care of a patch of ground outside, as well as looking after pot plants in the house and a variety of other plant containers, which give you the opportunity to grow flowers, herbs and even some vegetables and salad crops. Gardening covers all the jobs that are done to care for plants, from planning and planting to weeding, pruning, harvesting and recycling waste materials through the compost heap.

Gardening involves 'doing things', but to be a successful gardener also requires a little basic understanding of how plants grow and what is needed to get the best results through the seasons. You will learn by practice and experience and there will be some failures; occasionally plants will not grow well and some may die. But the positives will outweigh the negatives as you watch the seeds you have planted and the young plants you have nurtured grow into beautiful flowers and tasty fruit and vegetables.



How to use this book

This introduction to basic gardening has been produced for children who want to grow plants and have fun finding out about their local environment. Gardening jobs can be carried out at almost any time of the year. *Green Fingers and Muddy Boots* gives simple, seasonal instructions on how to grow flowers, fruit and vegetables and get the most enjoyment from a range of gardening activities. The programme of activities suggested requires positive work by the young gardener and at times support from a parent or supervising adult. Many children will be capable of working through the activities by themselves. However, the most enjoyment and best results will generally be achieved when the exercises are carried out as a group or family with help from Mum, Dad or a supervising adult. The activity sheets are suitable for group projects at school or with a youth group. At all times the young gardener is encouraged to get help and advice from newspaper and magazine articles, gardening books, the Internet and responsible adults, preferably an enthusiastic gardener.

The activity worksheets listed on p10 are downloadable from the accompanying CD, and can be undertaken even if you don't have access to a conventional garden. There are activities relating to the local environment that involve observing and recording the weather, insects, birds and animals. The broad range of activities correspond with the information provided in the book, and links are given in the relevant chapters. Indications on when to complete each activity are provided in the seasonal guide to gardening at the end of the book.

Gardening activity sheets

1. Recording the weather
2. Wildlife in your garden
3. Keeping a garden diary
4. Garden tools
5. Hazards in the garden
6. Making a bird table and fat-ball for feeding
7. Bug safari
8. Experimenting with soil
9. Making a mini compost heap
10. Drawing and naming plants
11. Trees
12. Identifying common weeds
13. Sowing seeds
14. Pricking-out and planting-on
15. Growing sunflowers
16. Seed collecting
17. Taking cuttings
18. Growing spring bulbs in pots
19. Growing potatoes in a bucket
20. Growing plants in shopping bags
21. What are my vegetables worth?
22. Garden vegetable soup
23. Fresh fruit tasting
24. Hanging baskets
25. Making a pallet garden
26. Watching seeds germinate
27. Making a floral necklace
28. Keeping cut flowers fresh
29. Grass heads
30. A garden scarecrow
31. Drying flowers and leaves
32. Floral decorations
33. Making monsters
34. Christmas decorations
35. Record of achievement
36. Registration form
37. Gardening web links



Damselfly

Young Gardener Certificate

To encourage young people to start gardening, The Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society (The Caley) has developed a Young Gardener Certificate as a reward for those young people who successfully complete the range of gardening activities suggested in this book. The certificate is of course optional, but gives the young gardener a goal to work towards. There is no set time to start or finish the activities in the Young Gardener Certificate programme. The activities are not intended as an examination or test, but to show that the young person has made an effort to do the exercise to the best of their ability and to have fun doing it! Excellence and perfection come with experience and practice.

On completion of each activity the worksheet must be signed off on the Record of Achievement (activity sheet 35 on the accompanying CD) by a responsible person, who will confirm, in their opinion, that the task has been completed to an acceptable standard.

REGISTRATION

In order to be eligible for the Young Gardener Certificate, you must apply to the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society, Edinburgh, using activity sheet 36, which can be found, along with further information on the Young Gardener Certificate, on the accompanying CD. The Caley will issue a registration number for each certificate. A Young Gardener Certificate will only be awarded if the person/group is registered and the Caley has received a completed Record of Achievement form.



Bee

Getting Started









Every garden has its own particular 'environment' which is influenced by a number of factors:

- The height above sea level (altitude).
- The direction it faces, whether north or south.
- The amount of rain that falls and the drainage conditions will determine whether your garden is wet or dry.
- The amount of sun and shade are determined by surrounding houses, fences, hedges and trees. Many plants will not grow well in shady areas; they need light and space.
- The wind can damage plants and stunt growth, so they will need protection on exposed sites.

These all contribute to your garden environment and determine the types of plants you can grow. When choosing a site to grow plants, particularly vegetables, try to select an area with good, deep, well-drained soil, with plenty of sunlight and no competition from trees, hedges or other large plants growing nearby.

But remember, you don't need a garden to start gardening. Plants can be grown in pots, plastic bags and any type of container that will hold compost or soil.

What a plant needs is:

P — place
L — light
A — air
N — nutrients
T — thirsty (water)