

A Garden Plot: The Tale of Peter Rabbit

Grade Levels

K - 2

Purpose

In this lesson, students will identify foods grown in a garden, observe various types of seed, and grow their own "milk jug" garden. Students will hear the *Tale of Peter Rabbit*, by Beatrix Potter and learn about produce that is grown in gardens or on farms.

Estimated Time

Four 20-minute story-reading sessions, Five 40-minute sessions, Ten 10-minute garden care and journaling sessions

Materials Needed

Interest Approach – Engagement:

- Books by Beatrix Potter
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils, pastels, water colors, or gel pens

Activity 1: Let's Read Some Books

- *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and other books by Beatrice Potter

Activity 2: Rabbits

- "Bunny Hop" music and music player (optional)
- Broad-tipped markers in assorted colors
- Food for "Rabbit Food Taste Test"- Parsley, Lettuce, Carrots with tops, beets, radishes, peas
- Masking Tape
- Scissors

Activity 3: The Garden

- Butcher paper
- Clear contact paper or laminating equipment
- Gravel
- Index Cards (unlined)
- Colored Pencils
- Duct tape or masking tape
- One-gallon plastic milk jugs with top cut off (1 per student)
- Seed packets with seeds such as pumpkin, zucchini, radish, turnip, carrot, basil, and parsley
- Soil
- Sunny outdoor location for gardens
- Tongue depressors
- Watering equipment
- Journals

Vocabulary Words

Beatrix Potter: a children's book author

fruit: the sweet and fleshy product of a tree or other plant that contains seed and can be eaten as food

garden: an area of land for the use of growing fruits, vegetables and flowers

grain: wheat or other cultivated cereal crops used as food

vegetable: a plant or portion of a plant used as food, typically the stem, leaves, or root

Did You Know? (Ag Facts)

- Bees are helpful to gardens to pollinate plants. They also can tell us when it might rain because they will return to their hive
- There are many types of gardens. Some gardens grow fruits and vegetables to eat, but other gardens grow flowers or are designed to attract butterflies. ¹
- Children who have participated in growing a garden are more likely to eat healthy foods like fruits and vegetables.²

Background Agricultural Connections

Our food, particularly the **fruits, vegetables,** and **grain** we eat are grown in the soil. Sometimes food is grown in individual **gardens.** Other times it is grown on large farms and sold through farmer's markets and grocery stores.

Gardens need sunshine, warmth, moisture and time to yield fruits, vegetables, and grains. We eat the stems, leaves, seeds, and/or fruit of garden plants to obtain nutrients and energy for a healthy diet.

Beatrix Potter lived with her parents in London, England. During her era, young women grew up and stayed at home with their parents until they were married. This is what Miss Potter did. The top floor of the Potter home, which was originally the nurser became Beatrix Potters studio, where she drew, and kept her artwork and pets. She was a fine artist and enjoyed using her pet as models. Her first book, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, was originally a fold-out story card, which she wrote and drew for a friend's child. Her friend suggested that she make it into a book and have it published. This she did. Keeping in mind that children have small hands, all of Potters books were very small. Collections of Miss Potter's pocket-sized storybooks, with unique green covers can still be borrowed from public libraries today.

Interest Approach - Engagement

1. Share information about a very special author, Beatrix Potter. Some facts about her life are stated in the *Background Agricultural Connections* section of the lesson. Other information about Beatrix Potter can be obtained from her books.
2. Without reading the stories, show the students a couple of Beatrix Potter storybooks. Allow students to observe her artwork and the medium she used for her drawings. Mention that illustrators choose which medium they would like to work with—pastels, crayons, water colors, etc.
3. Distribute one piece of unlined white paper to each student. Have the children select a medium for their artwork (crayons, markers, gel pens, pastels, colored pencils) and then draw a picture of an animal they might use as a character in a book they author.

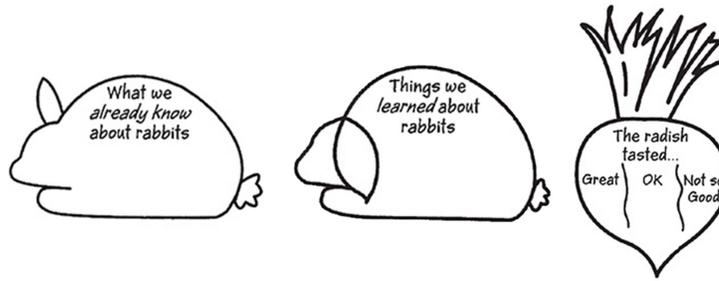
Procedures

Activity One: Let's Read Some Books

1. Throughout the next week, read and discuss several of Beatrix Potter's books including *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*.
2. After reading each story, select a language arts topic to develop with your students. Have the children:
 - Point to details they see in pictures.
 - State descriptive words they heard in the story.
 - Identify the front cover, back cover, title page, author, and illustrator of the book. Point to upper and lower case letters you are working on.
 - Show classmates specific words you ask them to find on a page.
 - Tell you which parts of the story could be real and which parts are pretend.

Activity Two: Rabbits

1. Make a scatter graph of things your students already know about rabbits.
2. If possible, invite 4-H or FFA rabbit owners to share their rabbits with your class. Discuss eating habits, diet, breeds, behaviors and care. Perhaps one of your students has a rabbit that can be brought to class.
3. Teach and practice the "Bunny Hop" dance routine.
4. Have a Rabbit Food Taste Test where the children try different kinds of rabbit food (lettuce, parsley, etc.). Record taste test results on graphs you prepare similar to the diagram below.
5. Discuss why rabbits are mammals and the characteristics of all mammals.
6. Conclude this activity by making a list of new information the students have learned about rabbits



Activity Three: The Garden

1. Ask students, "What do we need to grow a garden?" "What will we grow in our garden?"
2. Make a scatter graph of items that can be grown in a garden.
3. Make a list of items the students need in order to plant a garden.

Seeds

At a learning station with a parent volunteer, have the children observe various types of seeds they could plant in their garden. Seeds may include pumpkin, zucchini, radish, turnip, carrot, and parsley. Possible discussion topics are stated below:

- Discuss seed size and seed shape. What do they look like? What do they smell like?
- Is there a relationship between seed size and plant size?
- Which packages contain the most seeds? The least seeds?
- What are some benefits and challenges with planting small seeds? Large seeds?

Making the Garden

1. Assist students in making individual gardens.
 - Distribute one container, a bottom of a water or milk jug, to each student.
 - Have the students choose two types of seeds to plant in their personal gardens.
 - Have students make plant stakes for each seed they will plant by drawing a picture of the item on an index card with colored pencils. Attach a tongue depressor to the back of the index card with duct or masking tape. If you would like, laminate the stakes or cover them with clear contact paper. Set these aside for later use.
2. As a class, prepare the soil by mixing top soil, manure (sterilized), sand, and vermiculite. Speak with a local nursery about the quantities of each or buy a ready mix of potting soil. While preparing the soil, ask:
 - "How does the sand feel? The vermiculite? The manure?"
 - "Is soil made of only one type of substance?"
 - "If you were digging in the soil in a farm field, what might you find?"
3. At planting time, have each student place about 2" (5.08 cm) of gravel at the bottom of his or her container (gravel from the play yard will do) and then fill the remainder of the container with the prepared soil (about 6" (15.24 cm) deep). Make sure that the students do not fill the containers so high that the soil will run off when watered.
4. Using parent volunteers, have the students plant the seeds. The parents should teach the students how each particular seed needs to be planted, watered, etc. The plant stakes should be added at this time.
5. Have the children begin each day by putting their gardens outside in the sunlight, checking to see if the garden needs watering, and then watering if necessary.



Journaling and Discussing

1. Each morning the students should draw and/or write in their journals. Encourage the proper use of periods, exclamation points, capitalization, and pronouns. Teachers and parents can assist the students with journal-writing at various times during the "season." Journal entry topics may include:
 - What I Have Done Today?
 - What is Happening in My Garden?
 - How My Garden is Like a Farm.
 - Why My Garden is Different Than a Farm.
2. Class word lists can be made to assist in journal-writing. A word list example is shown below:

Who	What	When	Where
I	planted	today	in my garden
me	watered	yesterday	outside
he	grew	tomorrow	in the sun

3. Daily, have a discussion on a specific topic. Suggested topics are listed below.
 - *What needs to be done to protect the garden plants from pests such as bugs, rabbits, birds, and mold?*
 - *What are roots for? Why do they grow down?*

- *Why do plants wilt?*
 - *Why do plants need sun? Or do they?*
 - *What happens if one adds too much water?*
 - *What happens if plants are too close together?*
 - *Are the leaves of all plants alike?*
 - *Do all seeds sprout?*
 - *What does a plant need to survive?*
 - *Does air temperature affect plants?*
 - *What seeds are growing the fastest? Why do you think they are growing the fastest?*
4. After about three or four weeks, allow the children to take their journals and gardens home. Some of the plants can be transplanted into family gardens. Smaller plants, such as radishes, can remain in the container and placed in a well lit area. Take in the looks of pride as children walk out of school with their gardens... all because of Peter Rabbit!

Concept Elaboration and Evaluation

After conducting these activities, review and summarize the following key concepts:

- Many types of plants are grown for food. They include fruits, vegetables, and grains.
- Plants grow in the soil and require water, warmth, and sunshine.
- Plants can be grown in a small garden or on a large farm.
- Many farmers grow the fruits and vegetables we eat.



We welcome your [feedback](https://usu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4HhIVpN4L8IC2IT) (https://usu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4HhIVpN4L8IC2IT)! Please take a minute to tell us how to make this lesson better or to give us a few gold stars!

Enriching Activities

- Make a scarecrow for the garden.
- Invite a produce manager from a local grocery store to perform taste tests with the children.
- Make a Peter Rabbit salad for a luncheon treat.
- Invite other classes and administrators to visit your students' gardens.
- Have the students measure and record the length of their plants.
- Invite farmers to speak to your class about commodities they grow.
- Take digital pictures of the children with their gardens. Give one picture to each child who will write a sentence about it. Compile and make a class book.
- Show a video of The Tale of Peter Rabbit and compare and contrast the video and book.
- Use donated seeds from nurseries and make mosaics.

Sources

1. <https://kidskonnnect.com/science/gardens/> (https://kidskonnnect.com/science/gardens/)
2. <http://articles.extension.org/pages/27731/benefits-of-growing-your-own-fruits-and-vegetables>

Suggested Companion Resources

- [A Gardener's Alphabet](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/137/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/137/)
- [A Green, Green Garden](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1018/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1018/)
- [And the Good Brown Earth](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1096/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1096/)
- [Carrots Grow Underground](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1003/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1003/)
- [City Green](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1057/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1057/)
- [Eating the Alphabet](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/138/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/138/)
- [Farm](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/907/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/907/)
- [First Garden](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/198/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/198/)
- [First Peas to the Table](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/199/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/199/)
- [Grandpa's Garden](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/916/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/916/)
- [Green Bean! Green Bean!](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1012/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1012/)
- [Harvesting Friends, Cosechando Amigos](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/904/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/904/)
- [How Groundhog's Garden Grew](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1019/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1019/)
- [In the Garden: Who's Been Here](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1020/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1020/)
- [It's Our Garden: From Seeds to Harvest in a School Garden](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1021/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1021/)
- [Jo MacDonald Had a Garden](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1023/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1023/)
- [Mrs. Spitzer's Garden](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1025/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1025/)
- [Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1029/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1029/)

- [My School Yard Garden](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1030/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1030/)
- [On the Farm, at the Market](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/926/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/926/)
- [Our School Garden!](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/988/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/988/)
- [Pick, Pull, Snap! Where Once a Flower Bloomed](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1038/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1038/)
- [Plants Feed Me](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/337/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/337/)
- [The Carrot Seed](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1004/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1004/)
- [The Extraordinary Gardener](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/912/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/912/)
- [The Tale of Peter Rabbit](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/135/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/135/)
- [The Tiny Seed](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/223/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/223/)
- [The Vegetable Alphabet Book](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/373/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/373/)
- [Tops & Bottoms](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/134/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/134/)
- [Water, Weed, and Wait](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/989/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/989/)
- [Dwarf "Space Plant" Seeds](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/333/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/333/)
- [Garden Planner](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1087/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/1087/)
- [Utah Garden Planner](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/645/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/645/)
- [Build Your Own GrowLite](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/139/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/139/)
- [School Gardens: A Guide for Gardening and Plant Science](https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/283/) (https://agclassroom.org/matrix/resource/283/)

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