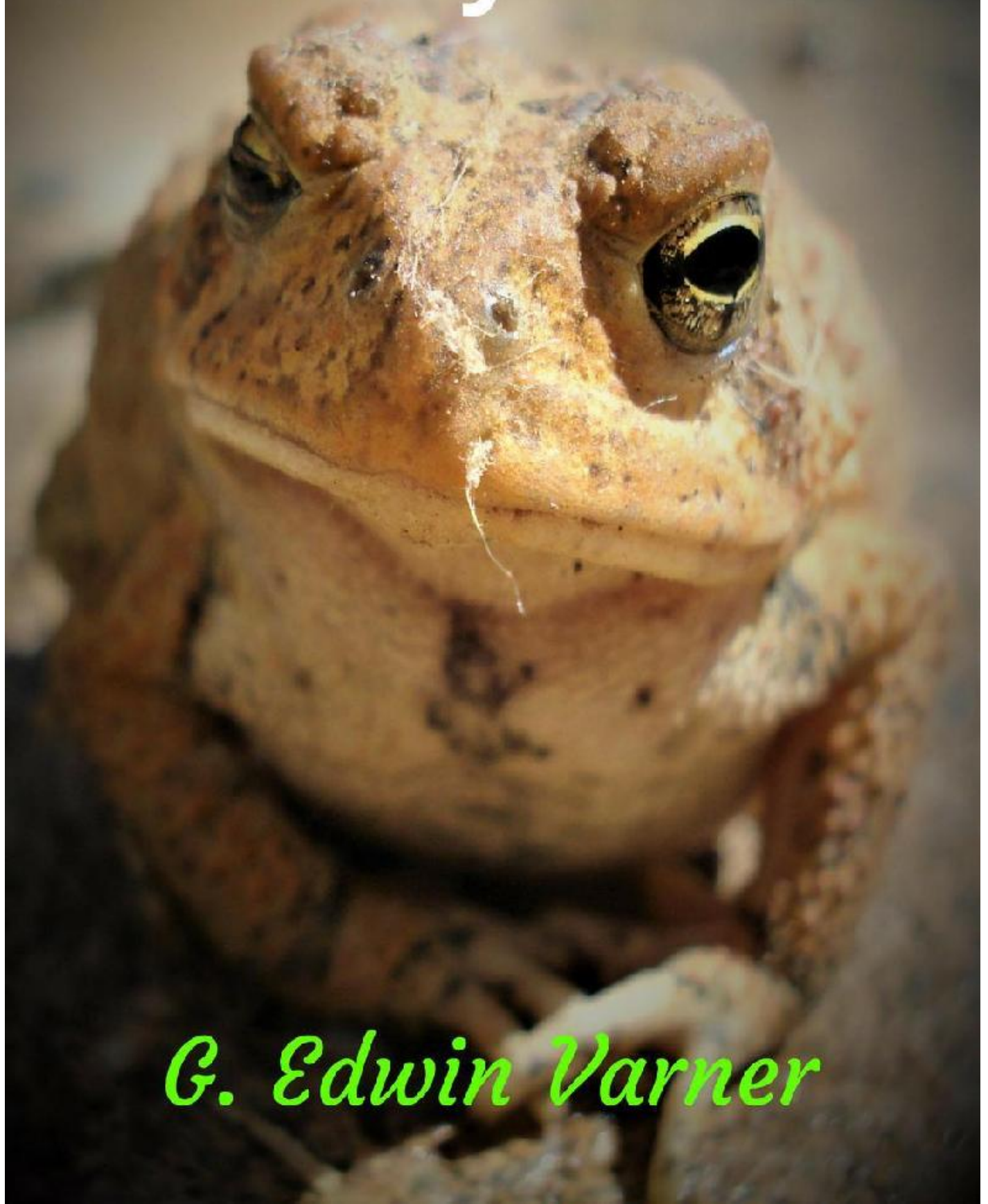


The Children's Curiosity Garden



G. Edwin Varner

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THE CHILDREN'S CURIOSITY GARDEN

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Written by G. Edwin Varner.

Preface

This publication helps you learn and discover flowers and plants that provide interest for children to grow and nurture in a garden. It is also a primer for them to explore the wonders of nature.

Please understand small children will need supervision while being around these plants and animals. Many plants and insects contain toxins harmful to health. I strongly advise adult supervision while any small child is in a flower or vegetable garden.

The information on each plant may contain inaccuracies. I have tried to research each plant as accurately as possible concerning their histories, growing conditions, and hardiness. Each plant has its USDA hardiness zones, best growth conditions, and my recommended varieties to find and grow. Please be aware they may not be immediately available, discontinued or replaced for better varieties by nurseries.

The following plants and animals are listed by their common name first then by their Latin name.

The digital photos are from my home, public gardens, many nurseries within my area and by Creative Commons (CC0) licensed images.

Introduction

The germination of a future gardener.

I suppose I am lucky – in becoming a gardener, that is. Raised on a farm, I worked around plants and animals. I was especially fond of growing the flowers and vegetables. I remember my mother having flower beds of multi-colored zinnias. From her, I learned how to sow flower and vegetable seeds.

So, what is all these remembrances-of-gardens-past have to do with anything? It's all about childhood gardening. It is all about learning and enjoying flowers, vegetables, and insects. The more I observed them, the more I wanted to learn. To teach a child about gardening, try to stimulate their interest in the natural world around them.

Let's face it; gardening is boring for children. But, there are ways to make a child interested at all the strange plants and animals that live in their backyards. I once heard a lecturer say, "Get children interested in growing flowers and you prevent them from a life of crime." I don't know if that is entirely accurate, but it makes sense.

The focus of this ebook is to use it as a primer to get children interested in gardening. I have selected to write about unusual and fascinating flowers, those that are easy to grow – including those having fragrances, the study of strange insects and animals plus developing an interest in rare vegetables. I feel it is these areas that will help stimulate a child to develop an interest in gardening. It also gives them a happy excuse to get their hands dirty. It will do them a world of good!

With the help of this ebook, let's get started in germinating interest in gardening for children and cultivating a beautiful future for them.

To find plants, bulbs or seeds of the following species and varieties, please visit your nearby larger garden centers or search online to find specialty nurseries that grow and sell them.

Awesome Blossom!

One way to make any child interested in gardening is to make the ordinary extraordinary. Grow something that will cause a child to stand still and stare. After the surprise eases the question always asked is, “what is that?”

It’s all about being big or unusual. Plant something that’s easy to grow and easy to form a smile. Eventually, you hear the words ‘awesome’, ‘wow’ or ‘cool.’ Congratulations! You have just recruited a new gardener.

The following flowers and plants are easy to grow and will always create reactions of surprise and wonder. Who knew gardening could be so much fun?

African Amaryllis – Hippeastrum



Holy moly! What big flowers you have Amaryllis! This plant resembles Little Red Riding Hood highlighting Grandma's (aka Big-Bad-Wolf) features.

Dutch growers and their distributors supply these large bulbs to nurseries around the world in the late fall. We grow them indoors to brighten those endless winter days. Planted in large pots, they slowly develop long, strap-like leaves and culminate in humongous sized flowers.

Purchase large, dormant bulbs from specialist bulb suppliers instead of those cheap, puny bulbs offered as boxed Christmas gifts. Big bulbs make big flowers. Everything about this plant says, "I'm big and beautiful!" Red or scarlet is the most popular flower color, but there is

also red with white, pure white, pink, rose and light to dark orange. No matter what the color, the size of the blossoms is impressive.

The fun is watching the flower stem and leaves slowly grow. It's a waiting game taking about four to six weeks from dormancy to full flowering. When the plant blooms, it's an eye-opener, especially for a child. Don't try for a Christmastime blooming for it may not always succeed. Let's face facts; children have other things on their mind concerning Christmas. It is better to allow these plants to bloom when needed – in the heart of winter. Valentine's Day would be an excellent time to plan for needed color.

To brighten a windowsill during the winter, an Amaryllis can provide plenty of color and amazement for young and old alike. All you need is patience.

Balsam – *Impatiens balsamina*



Regular Impatiens are not your easiest of flowers to grow from seeds. In fact, they can be a challenge, and that is why many gardeners prefer to purchase plants. Your basic garden variety Impatiens are also dull, especially to a child. However, another Impatiens called **Balsam** (*Impatiens balsamina*) offers more entertainment value to children.

Their seeds are larger than the standard Impatiens and are much easier to germinate. The plants grow upright and can become bushy with flowers of various colors, and shades plus have single to double petals. Oh please, it's still boring to a child – but wait until the developing seed capsules ripen on the plants. Yes, the interest is not the flowers but the seed pods.

The common name for many Impatiens plants is Touch-Me-Not. When the fuzzy pods get bigger, older, and the enclosed seeds are fully ripe, the slightest touch on them with a finger will cause the pods to EXPLODE. Who would think a flower garden could turn into a militarized zone? Well, not really. Seeds will shoot outward, shouts of surprise followed by laughter. Even the boring garden Impatiens do this trick with its seed pods although nobody sees it happen.

The exploding seed pods do not hurt – only causes surprise. It's like experiencing a slight static electric shock on your finger. Children can make a game of seeing who can touch a pod without it “going off.” This reaction can only happen when the seeds are ripe.

Any seed catalog or garden nursery offers seeds of this plant. They also can also grow in large containers filled with fertile, loamy soil. Unlike most Impatiens, Balsam plants can grow well in full to partial sunlight but still need to have adequate moist soil for better growth and bloom.

Elephant Ears Plant – *Colocasia esculenta*



When I first saw this plant at a garden center, I felt I shrunk in size, like that of Gulliver in *"Gulliver's Travels."* I was standing next to a clump of humongous leaves. This plant is amazing! Growers nickname it **"Elephant Ears"** or **"Taro."**

The leaves have a coarse texture with prominent veins, but some have exciting leaf colors. Some varieties have the usual green, but many have bronze, and even pure black (dark-purple) leaves. I had mixed feelings about this plant when I first encountered it. I was in awe but also a little intimidated by their enormous size.

Somewhere in the base of the plant are clusters of large, white arum-like flowers. Just like the leaves, the flowers are also larger than usual.

The flower has a modified leaf called a spathe, and the stamens or pistils are on the central yellow spadix. There is a slight foul odor associated with these types of flowers which attract pollinating flies.

This plant is in the same family as **Skunk Cabbage**, a swampy, large-leaved wildflower that has the unmistakable aroma of skunk when damaged. It is also a good candidate for something to amaze children.

Easy to grow from bulbs, we can plant Elephant Ears in the garden (remember, it needs plenty of space) but often raised in huge pots – like halved whiskey barrels. To get maximum growing size, it prefers fertile, well-drained soil, plenty of water, fertilizer and full sunlight to partial shade. The bulbs are hardy from zones 8 to 11, but a freeze will kill the outermost leaves. Northern growers will need to bring the potted bulbs indoors or in a heated garage for the winter.

You can find these bulbs in many larger garden centers or online bulb specialty nurseries.

Evening Primrose – *Oenothera glazioviana*



If you want to get a child interested in flowers, the **Tina James Magical Evening Primrose** is one of those hard-to-beat plants. This plant does a magic trick by popping open the blossoms right before your eyes in the early summer evenings.

Years ago, a garden writer, Tina James, popularized this very delightful plant as she hosted garden parties showcasing its beautiful flowers. In summer evenings, the large yellow flowers slowly open (like in time-lapse photography) right before your eyes. I have watched the flowers begin to open at 8:30 p.m. and ten minutes later they were fully open. Sometimes, they will “pop” open real fast. No kidding!

The blossoms exude a beautiful lemon, lily and honeysuckle blend perfume. The plant grows over three feet tall with hundreds of flowers during the summer. You can host several children's garden parties over this period. Serve a pizza or throw a barbecue and then await the time when the flowers pop open. There will be plenty of "wows" as the show progresses.

This plant is a hardy perennial (zones 5 to 9) and loves to grow in full sunlight and well-drained soil. Seeds are scarce to obtain. If you find any – latch onto them! They are easy to grow and mature plants will self-seed for future summer fun.

Moonflower – *Ipomoea alba bona-nox*



Not to be overshadowed by the theatrics of the Tina James Evening Primrose, described earlier, is another showstopper of a plant. Here is the **Moonflower Vine**. It has enormous, seven inches in diameter, white flowers that slowly open right-before-your-eyes as night begins in mid-summer.

This popular climbing annual vine is a cousin of the Morning-glory. It blooms in the evening until morning with large, velvety white blossoms. As the petals slowly unfurl they release a sweet, clove or lily-like perfume into the summer night air.

During the day, it looks like a mass of green vines climbing a trellis or pole. However, by early evening something mysterious happens. As nightfall darkens this vine unfolds their flower buds into these huge,

bright white, blossoms. If we are lucky, large, beautiful moths will come by to flutter around the flowers. The white petals and perfume attract them.

Moonflowers are easy to grow, and many seed catalogs and many garden centers sell the seeds.

Oriental Lily – *Lilium hybrida*



There are many varieties of **Oriental Lilies** available, and they are all gorgeous. Most, if not all, have huge, scented flowers. However, to impress a child – and those of us who refuse to grow up – the variety called **Conca de'Or** needs to be in every garden.

The first time I saw this lily, it was over my head. I had to look up, and there were all those gorgeous eight to nine inches-in-diameter blossoms looking down at me. One added benefit to having lilies at this level is the fragrance is closer to our noses, without having to stoop over. This lily has enormous – and I mean massive – blossoms! They are white with an interior of bright lemon yellow. The stamens have a brick-red color.

Growers classify this lily as an Oriental/Trumpet hybrid (called **Orienpet Lilies**) and can reach as tall as eight feet after growing for, at least, three years. It is hardy from zones 4 to 9. Like most garden lilies, these prefer to grow in full to part sun and fertile, well-drained soil. If the garden experiences windy conditions, it's wise to have the stems tied to a support pole to prevent breakage. It's worth the time to do this. A lily, like this one, is worth making sure it is secure.

Ox-Eye Daisy – *Buphthalmum speciosum*



This plant (also called *Telekia speciosa*) can teach children about the strength of body but also of character. It looks like a big, overgrown daisy but, it is not one. It's "The Little Engine That Could."

Think of a typical yellow daisy working-out in a gym, building up plant muscles. It is pumping iron big-time. Plants don't have muscles but looking at this big "daisy" you have to wonder.

It is a perennial, hardy to zones 3 to 7 and grows in part shade, average, well-drained, garden soil. It loves moist soil. One reason for this is providing enough water for its huge, coarse, heart-shaped leaves.

In late summer, it flexes its thick, five-foot-tall stems and displays its large, sunflower-like blossoms. The single, feathery petals are deep yellow to yellow-orange. Like any bodybuilder, it commands attention. It's strong as an ox, and it shows. It is easy to grow from seeds, but larger garden centers offer potted plants.

Sunflower – *Helianthus annuus*



Well, what can be said about these easy to grow old-time favorites for children and adults? If you have never raised these giants, you should.

Years ago, they were your basic yellow flower grown for its impressive size but also for their valuable seeds. For most of history, the seeds were (and still are) of considerable importance for they are high in nutrition and energy value. Sunflower oil is a crucial commodity throughout the world, and the seeds valued for bird feed. For a child, none of this matter. It's the size of those flowers that counts!

For a large flower to grow tall, it needs to have a long, thick stem or stalk. The stem is so sturdy and fibrous that even an ax can have trouble cutting through it.

Today, sunflowers have new colors such as red, orange, white, blended colors, and pastel yellows. You can purchase seeds from any seed catalog or garden center. For a tall variety – over 14 feet – grow **Mongolian Giant**. This plant will make a strong impression on any child (and adult)!

There is another way to impress a child with sunflowers...



Instead of height how about width? Have you ever seen a field of sunflowers? Thousands and thousands of flowers swaying in a breeze? Some farms grow them for sunflower oil and birdseed. The sight of all these flowers is breathtaking!

Venus Flytrap – *Dionaea muscipula*



This unusual plant lives up to its unworldly name. It is a carnivore, specifically, an insect eater. It has modified leaves that act as moveable traps to capture unsuspecting bugs (typically flies and spiders) and slowly digest them.

These “spooky” plants are native to the coastal wetlands of the Carolinas in the United States and live in sphagnum moss marshes. They still need sunlight to make energy, but they eat insects to add nitrogen and phosphorus to their diet. Other plants have devised similar methods to eat bugs like the **Sundew** plants. Their sticky leaves fold over to trap insects and slowly dissolve them. Sounds ghastly, but, – let’s face it – these plants are fascinating!

Children may want to have a *Little Shop of Horrors* of their own. The problem is these plants are difficult to grow. They need specific growing conditions like that of their native area. Raising them like any other plant will kill them. In some garden centers, I see small plants growing in plastic pots with a transparent lid. It acts like a little terrarium, but, if placed in sunlight, the plants will overheat and die. A large terrarium, set out of direct sunlight is best for all carnivorous plants.

Before purchasing these plants, please research on how to raise them. If successful, you may think you hear, "FEED ME!" coming from the plants now and then.

Easy-Peasy Posies!

One other way to make any child interested in gardening is to grow flowers in easy ways. Some flowers have large seeds which are better to handle and sow. You can scatter many seeds outside in a flower bed. And once the seeds germinate, it may not take long for them to grow and bloom.

The key to gardening is patience and that may be the most significant obstacle in teaching children how to garden. In today's world, we (especially children) expect quick results. It does not take long for interest to fade away. In gardening, immediate results do not happen. We have to plan, act, wait and then enjoy the exciting results. Children have to learn this valuable lesson – for everything they do in life.

Calendula officinalis



The other names for this flower are Pot Marigold and Corn Marigold. These names are confusing since growers call another flower a Marigold, which we will see in a moment.

These flowers are in the Daisy family and have seeds easy to sow – either indoors or outside. There are many varieties, and the flower

colors range from bright yellows and vibrant oranges to mixed shades. Depending on the type, Calendulas are an annual or tender perennial.

The flowers are edible and add color to salads, rice dishes, soups, and stews. This culinary usage explains the common nickname of Pot Marigold. People can also use them as a dye to add coloring to fabrics and as an application to skin lotions. I guess the central question is what can't it do?

The flowers bloom in mid-summer until a killing frost. They will self-seed, and new flowers will grow and bloom next year. The plants are low maintenance. They need plenty of sunlight and well-drained soil to grow well. The occasional clipping off of old flowers helps prevent excessive seed production and produce more flowers.

Overall, this is an excellent plant for children to learn how to sow seeds and care for them. It also teaches them flowers can provide other purposes instead of only being pretty.

Cleome hassleriana



Gardeners often call this plant the Spider Flower, Spider Legs Flower or Spider Plant due to the elongated stamens radiating from the petals. Let's tell children this is a flower *Spider-Man* would most likely grow.

The plants grow upright as spikes instead of being bushy. It's common for them to grow to nearly six feet tall by fall. During this time, they bloom for most of the summer. The flowers can be white, dark to light pink and even a lavender-purple color. Some varieties are bi-colored of pink and white or pale lavender-purple and white. Older types typically have a light fragrance, but the scent displeases most people.

Cleome is a favorite annual for flower gardens giving well-needed color and height. They prefer to grow in sunlight to partial shade and well-drained soil. Sow seeds indoors, but better germination can happen if

planted outdoors in early spring where they are to bloom. The plants will self-seed, and a multitude of seedlings will sprout next spring.

They are beautiful, and children will have fun watching them grow and bloom – especially when the hummingbirds and butterflies feed on the flowers. They have proven to be favorite annuals for generations of gardeners and children. You can find seeds at many garden centers and in catalogs.

Cornflower – *Centaurea cyanus*



Gardeners have always considered this a cottage garden favorite for its intense blue flowers. However, it has not been ideal for farmers for it grew like a weed in grain crops – wheat, oats, barley, and, as its name implies, corn. It is not much of a threat today for there are far more invasive weeds to worry over.

It eventually became a cherished garden flower for it is effortless to sow and grow in any garden. Cornflowers make beautiful cut flowers, for they can last a long time in a vase of water. They can have single to double petals, and the colors range from the intense blue to purple, pink and white.

This flower reminds me of the old Hans Christian Anderson tale of the ugly duckling turning into a beautiful swan. No one liked this flower, but

over time people eventually accepted it. It once became a fashion accessory for men. Its other common name is **Bachelor's Buttons**, for the insertion of a flower or a small bouquet into the buttonholes of jackets or coats. It was also the favorite flower of President John Kennedy. Hey, not bad for a colorful weed! For children, this flower is terrific for picking, and that amazing blue color is attractive to anyone.

Seeds of this annual are in almost all seed catalogs and garden centers. Some nurseries will even offer potted plants.

Four O’Clock – *Mirabilis jalapa*



The other common name for these fragrant flowers is **Marvel of Peru** for they are native to this area of South America.

These flowers have an impressive feature that will delight any child. It has the limited ability to tell time. The flowers remain closed during the morning and through most of the day until late afternoon. If they are growing in partial shade in the late afternoon, the flowers will open either side of 4 o'clock.

I would not set a watch by them; however, if all goes according to plan, you can tell your child or grandchild “it’s almost 4 o’clock so let’s go see if the time-telling-flowers are blooming.” Some kids will not believe you or think you have “gone loopy” but, hey, it’s worth a try.

If the time telling act does not interest a child possibly the color of the flowers will entice them. The flowers can be white, pink, red and yellow but there are multicolored varieties like the **Broken Colors Series** having stripes, splashes, smears, and blotches of different colors on the same flower. I have seen some plants have many weird flower colors.

These plants are easy to grow from seed, and the plants can become a shrub depending on where you live. In southern gardens, the plants can grow bushy. They love to grow in the morning to early afternoon sunlight then shady conditions to stimulate the flowers to bloom around 4 o'clock. Many seed catalogs and most garden centers offer seeds and possibly the dormant stems, which will make larger displays.

Indoor Bulb Growing



What could be more natural than digging a hole in the ground and planting a bulb? How about planting a bulb in a pot filled with potting soil? For spring-blooming bulbs, the planting in both ground and containers should be in the fall months.

The outdoor bulbs need to spend the winter in the cold soil to develop their roots and flower buds. The same process is for potted daffodils, tulips, hyacinths, and other bulbs. By placing the potted bulbs in an unheated garage or some place cold (but never freezing conditions), the bulbs will root. I would advise not to put pots in the refrigerator for they take up a lot of space.

By late winter, take the containers out of cold, dark storage and slowly adjust them to warmth and light. Place them by a south-facing window,

check daily for any watering and within a month they should bloom.

Potting-up bulbs may sound dull to a child. However, they ask many questions, so it is not all in vain. Seeing the developing plants and flowers grow, especially indoors for the winter, should keep a child very interested. Have a game measuring how much the developing shoot has grown each day.

After flowering, try to keep the leaves green and healthy. Don't throw them away for you and your child can find an excellent place to transplant the bulbs into a better outdoor area in the late spring. This idea is a good lesson in planning, having patience and recycling.

Marigolds – *Tagetes erecta* and *Tagetes patula*



Marigolds are one of the easiest flowers for children to grow and raise. Many times, garden centers, nurseries, and garden shows will often give out small potted Marigolds to children as welcome gifts or door prizes.

The large-flowered varieties are **African Marigolds** (*Tagetes erecta*) while the smaller-flowered ones are the **French Marigolds** (*Tagetes patula*) even though these plants originated in Mexico – go figure! Colors range from red to orange, gold, yellow and off-white. Practically all varieties will become bushy and bloom all summer.

Marigold leaves and stems often have a peculiar odor that many adults find offensive. The plants only smell when you touch or handle the leaves. As a former nurseryman, I always noticed it was usually the

adults who complained. Children, however, were more interested in the beautiful flowers. One colorful variety called **Golden Age** has odorless foliage. It has large, orange, double flowers. It grows well in a sunny location with well-drained, fertile soil.

When introducing flower gardening to a child, you can't go wrong with a pretty Marigold.

Mexican Sunflower – *Tithonia rotundifolia*



Unlike most relatives of sunflowers, this eye-catching annual plant only grows to an average of five feet tall and has vibrant, orange-red daisy-like flowers. The plants are also bushy so there will be many flowers to enjoy over the summer and into the fall.

Tithonia is native to Mexico and also grows wild in Central America. It is easy to grow from seed and raise in any garden. Being a relative of the sunflower, it loves to grow in full sunlight and tolerates less fertile, drier soil. It is one of the most drought tolerant flowers you can grow in a garden. You don't have to worry about watering it if you are away for a while.

Since it is long blooming, it attracts butterflies and hummingbirds all summer. There will be plenty of entertainment counting all those butterflies and hummingbirds arriving for refreshing nectar smoothies from all those blossoms.

The variety called **Torch** is available as seed from many catalogs and garden centers. It is perfect for children's gardens since it grows less tall, is bushy and is the favorite hangout for all the neighborhood butterflies and hummingbirds. Have the kids sit in lawn chairs and sip fruit smoothies while watching the birds and the butterflies. Not a bad way to spend a hot summer day!

Shasta Daisy – *Leucanthemum x superbum*



We cannot leave out the standard “true” daisy for growing in children’s gardens. I emphasize the word ‘true’ for it is a commonplace to add “daisy-like” when describing flowers that have a similar flower structure. Shasta Daisies are the garden variety plants bred from the common, roadside weed daisies. They were always the go-to flower for providing quick, makeshift bouquets. Their closest relative is the fall blooming chrysanthemum.

The flowers always represent freshness, happiness, and innocence. They were also a favorite old-time prognosticator of telling if a love interest is interested in you. A child would commit petal-ectomies (plucking off a daisy’s white petals) to say whether a love interest

returns the love back. “She loves me; she loves me not...” and so on until all the petals are off the head of a daisy. The last plucked petal determines if the love is true or not. It is a rigged game if you count the number of petals first. I am not sure if children do this anymore (much to the relief of all daisies).

Children can grow Daisies from seed, but purchasing plants can give quicker blooming. They are easy for any child to raise. They are perennial and are hardy from zones 4 to 9. One thing is for sure – children love daisies, and I plucked no petals finding out that fact.

Snapdragons – *Antirrhinum majus*



This annual is the original hands-on, interactive flower toy. No batteries, no missing parts, and no apps. Oh dear, it sounds like one boring, big snoozer of a flower in today's high-tech world. Maybe so, but little children, before they get the electronic play urge, can find these plants entertaining.

The flower petals look like a mouth. By pressing them together with your fingers or prying them open and quickly releasing them, they suddenly snap shut. In a child's imagination, the flowers are like those of a ferocious dragon. Remember, for a small child, this activity can intrigue and be entertaining. The fun continues if a bumblebee tries to open the dragon's petal jaws and slips inside the flower – and then re-emerge and fly to another blossom. This observation is a golden opportunity to teach a child to leave a bee alone and watch it. They won't hurt you by watching them. Allow a child to imagine what it would be like to crawl or push their way into a flower.

Snapdragons come in all colors (except blue) and all heights. Do your child a favor and grow the taller varieties (like the **Rocket Series**) instead of those dreadful, dwarf, open-mouthed varieties. You can raise seedlings indoors and later transplanted them outside in a sunny location. Seeds and plants of different named types are available at any garden center or seed catalog.

Spanish Flag Vine – *Quamoclit lobata*



Botanists also name this plant *Mina lobata* or *Ipomoea lobate* and is an annual climbing vine related to the common Morning-glory. It has several spikes of many two inches long, tubular flowers. They change colors as they grow and age; from bright red to orange buds, then to yellow and then to white flowers. This vine is easy to train on a fence, trellis or left to sprawl in a hanging basket.

Let's face facts – Morning-glories are boring for children. Yes, they are beautiful, but they bloom only in the morning. Try to get a kid excited about that! This plant, however, flowers all day long, has a different flower shape, and it attracts the hummingbirds.

I grew several Morning-glories one summer, and the birds overlooked them but competed against one another to sip nectar from these flowers. Watching them was comical! Have you ever seen hummingbirds fight? Grow this vine to see it happen.

The seeds can be difficult to germinate; they need “chipped” or nicked with a sharp knife to have faster germination. This surgery will allow water to enter the seed faster. For heaven's sake don't let a child do this but take your time doing it. Another, but safer, practice is to soak the seeds in warm water for a day then sow them in individual pots. Start these plants (and Morning-glories) about a month before planting outside in the early summer.

You can find seeds in many seed catalogs and garden centers but can also be available as young potted plants.

Zinnia elegans



You may have sensed a pattern here in this section of kid-friendly flowers. We have reviewed the Calendulas, Cornflowers, Sunflowers, Mexican Sunflowers, Shasta Daisy, and Marigolds. They and Zinnias are related to one another. They are also simple to grow from seeds and easy to nurture in any garden.

What is so surprising is they seem to have characteristics of all these other flowers combined. They have a broad range of vivid colors, big enough sized seeds for small fingers to handle, have different sizes from tall to short, they grow bushy and can bloom for most of the summer.

As an annual, sow them a few weeks indoors before setting outside or sprinkle the flattened seed in a well-prepared bed. What makes them unique to a child is probably due to the intense color of the flowers –

especially those grown as a mixture of colors. Plus, it also helps when multitudes of butterflies come to land on them for nectar smoothies.

There are so many varieties to choose from, but I would recommend growing a hybrid variety. Why hybrids? The simple answer is resistance to the powdery mildew fungal disease. Old fashioned Zinnias are notorious for being susceptible to this disease. Hybrid plants are more disease resistant. Thus, they grow better and bloom better. Hybrids are the way to go for more enjoyment for children and yourself. You can find hybrid Zinnia seed of many colors from many seed catalogs and at garden centers.

Smells into Smiles!

As adults, we have learned over the years many words describing a flower's fragrance. A child, however, gets to the point – it smells. Flowers either smell nice, or they stink. Flower scents may not be especially exciting to a child, but it adds a dimension of interest in gardening.

Several other flowers mentioned above have a fragrance, but they also provide something else more exciting to a child. The following plants and flowers offer strong perfumes that should cause any child (and yourself) to produce plenty of smiles. They may not be fascinating or spectacular, but they sure command attention. Have a child explore a garden by using his or her nose.

Cosmidium burridgeanum



This native daisy-like wildflower from Texas is a new annual bedding plant with yellow-tipped, purple-red-brown centered flowers. Look for the variety called **Philippine** which grows shorter and bushier than the species plants. The many flowers release an intense chocolate or cocoa fragrance. They are ideal for bedding, rock gardens, and containers plus grows well in drier soil and prefers as much sunlight as possible.

This plant is easy to grow from seeds and easy to fall in love with, especially by children. You can sow seeds a few weeks indoors before setting outside in the garden for a more extended blooming enjoyment. You should clip the spent flowers back during the summer to extend the growing season. By doing so, they will have a repeat performance of spectacular blooming until a fall frost.

This plant is a magnet for bees, butterflies, and chocoholics like us kids – young and old. Grow several plants in your garden to increase the chocolate scent to spread into the warm summer air. The seeds are rare and may be difficult to locate.

Dianthus superbis



This seed-grown, Dianthus variety called **Rainbow Loveliness** earns my vote for outstanding perfume plant of the flower garden. The aroma is delightful – almost like that of lilacs. It releases this fragrance in prodigious quantities and can drift in the summer evening air.

They prefer to grow in sunlight to a height of two feet tall and are bushy. It is perennial but acts like an annual when sown early indoors and transplanted outside. They are hardy from zones 5 to 9.

Not only is the perfume beautiful but so are the multitudes of feathered, single-petal blossoms. The flower petals are fringed or feathery, colored with rose, pink, lavender or white and all having a greenish center eye. Many people love this variety for its outstanding perfume.

Grow this plant if you are serious about fragrance gardening. Children will enjoy this unique aroma floating in the garden during the early evening and those weird-looking feather-flowers. Seeds are available at some garden centers.

Eucalyptus cinerea



These Australian native plants have that unique fragrance we (especially children) can identify with when suffering from a cold or the flu. It is the primary ingredient for the medications to ease a sore throat, stuffy nose or a persistent cough. Well, this will not be a good reason for children to grow these plants. They will avoid it – like taking cold medication. Let's think in a more positive way for children to raise this tree.

This species, nicknamed the **Silver Dollar Eucalyptus**, has rounded, silver dollar sized leaves attached around the stem. The leaves are a dull, silver gray, and the whole plant looks very different from other shrubs in a garden. You can dry the stems and leaves to create scented fall or holiday craft projects for the children. How about teaching them

where these plants grow? Tell them all about Australia, kangaroos, and, especially, the adorable Koala Bear who loves to eat these plants.

This plant thrives in full sunlight, well-drained soil, and even neglect. You can also plant them into a large container or in the garden. Are you ready to bring a “down under” look to your garden? Well, take a deep breath and plant it! Seeds and plants are available at many garden centers and in catalogs.

Mints – Mentha



These are always a favorite plant with children for each species has a different, potent leaf-fragrance. They will grow willy-nilly everywhere if not confined so, please don't plant them in your flower garden. They grow best in those difficult places and areas where you do not mind where they will spread. This location could be a special place where children may raise them.

They are excellent ground covers and release the intense, but enjoyable, fragrances when touched or walked on. The scents are both soothing and excitable. Plant them in sunlight or shade and in any soil. One recommended variety to grow (only because I have a sweet tooth) is **Chocolate Mint**. Sorry, it does not smell like a Hershey bar, but instead, it is a variety of Peppermint. It smells like those yummy chocolate

covered thin mint patties. The foliage is a deep green with a little bronze color. If they had a foil wrapping, it would be even better!

There are other name-scented varieties such as **Apple**, **Pineapple**, **Orange**, and the ever-popular **Spearmint**. Many herb nurseries offers these plants. Take your child with you and have fun choosing which ones to grow.

Reseda odorata



The other name of this delightful plant is 'Mignonette,' French for "little darling" and 'reseda' means to calm down or have a calming influence. It is another one of those plants that remind me of the story of "*The Ugly Duckling*" by Hans Christian Anderson.

This poor plant is weed-like; being lanky and skinny as it grows. The small flowers lack bright colors – light green and brown with red tips. People will call it an ugly plant for the flowers are not especially colorful or attractive, BUT they release a heady, highly enjoyable raspberry perfume into the air, all day and night. You can detect the fragrance yards away.

It grows to two feet tall and becomes bushy. They make excellent cut flowers and container-grown plants. It loves to grow in sunlight and

moderately dry, lime-based soil. Sow the seeds on the ground and lightly cover. Within a week they should germinate. To get as much fragrance as possible, try to grow many plants.

They may not be especially attractive to children but tell them about how the ugly duckling eventually changes into a beautiful swan. Be a darling and grow this, won't you? Seeds are available in many seed catalogs.

Scented Geraniums – *Pelargonium tomentosum*, *graveolens*



Just like the Mints, these beautiful plants are famous for their strong leaf fragrances and unusual shapes. Children will find them strange and mysterious. How can a plant smell like another plant? How can we solve that mystery?

Please do not confuse these plants with the common bedding geraniums. The flowers are showy and brightly colored but the leaves, when handled, release the powerful and exciting aromas. They make outstanding container plants, but they grow to their full potential when grown in a flower bed.

They are not hardy but can grow indoors in pots on a windowsill. Plant these flowers in full sunlight and fertile, well-drained soil. Heights vary

but trim back to make them bushy. A few recommended varieties for growing include the favorite **Peppermint Scented Geranium**. Its large leaves are fuzzy and smell strongly of mint. It forms a good-sized plant over the summer.

Another popular variety is the **Attar of Roses Scented Geranium**. Without question, it is the one most enjoyed by several generations of gardeners. This type is the real, old-fashioned species heavily scented of Damask roses.

These varieties and others are available at many garden centers. Have fun nose-sampling all of them!

Sweet Peas – *Lathyrus odorata*



These are the most popular climbing annual vines known for their beautiful colors and sweet perfume.

For little children, these lovely flowers can provide them with hours of wonder and enjoyment. When I had my nursery, a customer told me of her little girl's love of Sweet Peas – especially for their pretty fragrance. For them, it was magical perfume used only by garden fairies. I smiled and said something generic like “how cute,” but I always remember that strange fairy association with these vines.

Sweet Peas prefer cool growing conditions, but they can grow well even in warm conditions if the soil does not dry out. Grow them in sunlight to partial shade, on a trellis or other fixture for them to climb on. Please remember one important fact – the seeds are poisonous so don't eat

any for dinner! Keep these vines in a flower garden and away from the vegetable garden.

There are many colorful varieties offered by seed companies. They all make excellent cut flowers having that fairy-approved perfume for the house.

Going Positively Buggy!

A gardener has to know the livestock that lives and grows among their flowers, and vegetables. There are many insects, great and small, living in the garden and you rarely notice them until they eat the flower petals, fruits, and leaves. Let's face it – a garden is one big veggie smorgasbord. However, let's look at insects from another perspective.

Most of the garden bugs are harmless, sometimes destructive, but safe. A child can see insects as amazing wonders of nature. They all have six legs while spiders (commonly mistaken as being insects,) have eight. They have different looks, colors, feeding habits, and behaviors, but interesting to watch and learn.

Allow a child to become a professional “bugologist” by allowing them to view all the buggy activities on and around flowers. Reassure children the bugs will not hurt them if they only look at them. Have your child remember ***The Bug Rule: No touch but watch.***

Bumblebees – Bombus species



Scientists once named these true-bees “humble-bees,” but with changes in language and pronunciation, they later became bumblebees. Unlike honeybees, they form small colonies with a single queen. Depending on the size of the cavity in which they nest, most occupy less than 30 bees, on average.

Bumblebees remind me of little bears with wings. Years ago, scientists could not understand how they could fly. They have chubby bodies with smallish wings but should not be able to fly, yet, they do. They can be so attentive to flowers you can get close to watch them. Sometimes, pollen covers them, and they look like small snowmen!

All bees can turn nectar and pollen into honey. It is their essential food source to survive during times of the year when flowers are not

available such as in winter or summer drought. For flowers, bees are necessary for transferring pollen from flower to flower. Botanists call this process cross-pollination, and it is vital to form seeds. The bees get pollen and nectar while the flowers encourage the bees to visit many similar flowers. This is a good lesson for children in cooperation; you help me, and I will help you.

Bumblebees do not form large hives but live as small families in holes or cavities. Here, they store honey in little earthen pots. They remind me of Winnie-the-Pooh dipping his paws into jars of honey and eating the sticky sweetness. Bumblebees are passive, but they can sting (feels like a pinprick) when angry. Just leave them be and enjoy watching them.

Butterflies – Lepidoptera



There are many butterflies and moths in the world – some with large colorful wings. Due to their brightly colored wings, they become referred to as being “flying flowers.” Butterflies prefer flying during the day while moths prefer the evening and night.

To attract these beneficial insects to a garden, it helps if you provide three essential requirements. The first is to grow many varieties of flowers that provide plenty of nectar, which is sugar water but with added nutrients necessary for energy and growth. I like to call them “nectar smoothies.” You can get up close to watch butterflies while they feed. They use a long-coiled tube for a mouth. It acts like a straw to slurp-up nectar within a flower. Several flowers produce nectar, including those mentioned in this ebook. However, there are more nectar-rich flowers available to grow in gardens. Nectar may have a

different taste (or smell), so the butterflies like to sample different blossoms.

A second requirement is food plants for their young – called caterpillars. The caterpillars don't sip nectar but eat plants like we eat a salad. They chew leaves, flowers, and stems of specific plants they prefer to eat. For example, the caterpillars of **Monarch butterflies** (*Danaus plexippus*,) eat only Milkweed plants.

The third requirement is finding shelter (such as hiding under large leaves or limbs of trees) to protect them from other bugs and birds that try to eat them and against torrential rain.

Butterfly watching involves patience, quietness, and curiosity for all children.

Honeybees – *Apis mellifera*



Like bumblebees, honeybees are another vital visitor to flowers. Yes, they can sting, but they do that as a defensive action. They are not out “to get you or me” by anger or revenge. We have to remember they are small creatures living in a big world with many large things trying to eat them. We should not fear bees – except if you are allergic to their venomous stings. If you leave them alone, they will leave you alone.

They live in large colonies called hives, raised and controlled by a queen. They produce honey to feed each other and store it in waxy structures called honeycombs. Once common, populations of hives have declined over recent years. Scientists are not sure why this is happening. The world with fewer honeybees is alarming for we need them to pollinate our essential food crops. Let’s help honeybees and

bumblebees by planting more nectar-rich flowers in our gardens and use less pesticide. By doing so, we also help ourselves.

Something Scary This Way Comes.

When exploring a garden filled with colorful flowers and vegetables, we will sometimes come across little beasties that will scare the daylights out of us. Maybe it is their looks and past encounters with them that scares us. But are they that scary?

Take time with your child and discover what looks frightening may not always be so. Many bugs seem scary but are “good bugs” for they help to eat other insects that harm our flowers and vegetables.

Io Moth – *Automeris io*



Older children will think this is exciting and funny, but younger ones may resort to wetting their pants. You can reassure them this is only a harmless night-flying moth and not some scary, ferocious creature.

Although this moth is active during the night, it rests for the day among the flowers. It is one of a group of giant silkworm moths and uses these wing spots to mimic the eyes of something ferocious and a “you better get away – NOW” scare tactic. It works well!

When threatened, this moth exposes the large eyespots on the hind wings resembling the stare of large, spooky eyes. Large eyespots in butterflies and moths have proven to scare predatory birds, and us. But that is what Mother Nature wants you (and any other night critter) to believe. It is an excellent example of a phenomenon called mimicry –

being something you are not. Tell children this moth is celebrating Halloween all the time.

The Io Moth once was a common moth but is becoming rare. It is native from central to eastern parts of North America, but relatives of it exist elsewhere in the world to give everyone (and other animals) a sudden, heart-stopping scare.

Praying Mantis – *Mantis religiosa*



It looks like a space alien with those big eyes. How creepy and scary is that? Another disturbing feature is the way a mantis follows your movements. You move one way, and their head turns toward you.

They can grow larger than most insects. By late summer it's common for them to be longer than your hand. They look frightening for many small children, but they are safe to handle although their big spiny arms (which reach out to "nab and grab" bug-food) can pinch your fingers.

Let's leave them alone or place them on a nearby plant out of harm's way. They may stay there, and a child can return later to see if it caught itself a tasty meal. In the fall, they lay a hard, brown foam-looking sack containing several eggs. In the spring lots of tiny mantid babies will hatch and walk away to catch smaller insects. Believe it or not, these are

very beneficial insects every garden should have. They are not so scary once you get to know them.

Spiders – Araneae species



Who cannot suddenly be startled when a spider races by us or even climbs on our bodies? That happened to me as a little boy. A wolf spider climbed up my bare leg and went up into my summer shorts. I screamed in terror, yanked off my shorts, and ran to get away from the humongous spider. It would have been hilarious if shown on one of those home video television shows.

Spiders are not insects for they have eight legs. They evolved separately from insects but coexisted with them as a food resource. They are beneficial to help control insect populations. In some parts of the world, especially in the tropics and deserts, spiders can grow big – as in the size of your hand. They can attack mice and small birds but rarely harm us. A relative of spiders called scorpions can be very dangerous to us

and need to be feared. Thank goodness I live far away from them otherwise I would move to Mars.

If you see a spider leave it alone. If it is in the house, try to capture and release it outdoors. Yeah, okay. Better said than done but let's try it. Teach children (and me) to admire their silken webs and marvel at how they catch flying insects.

Wasps – Vespula species



Mistaken as being bees, wasps are predatory and are always in search of something meaty – anything from small insects to your hamburger at a late summer barbecue. They also have the ill temperament that goes along with being predatory. Don't even try to get up-close-and-personal with this group. Unlike true bees, they do not search out nectar and pollen from flowers. They will land on them to catch a bug to eat.

“Bugologists” commonly call wasps “paper wasps” since they construct their nests from macerated (chewed up) wood pulp spread into flat layers. As the layers dry, they turn into dark gray paper. Wasps will add layer after layer of the material to form sections and glue their eggs to the underside of each layer. When the eggs hatch they feed the little grubs mashed-up buggy meat (or your hamburger.) Sounds delightful, doesn’t? NO!

These paper nests, like those of the **Bald-Faced Hornet** (*Dolichovespula maculata*,) are rounded – some the size of basketballs – and hang from tree or shrub branches. You don’t want to mess with these bad girls! Ground wasps, such as **Yellow Jackets** (*Vespula maculifrons*,) typically live underground and are a painful problem when walking by or running over the entrance hole with a lawnmower.

The most common wasp is the type that builds small paper umbrella nests underneath roofs, doorways or other structures. They can provide plenty of stinging power. Wasps are vital as a natural way to control insect pests even though we consider them to be a pest. It's tough being a predator!

Gardening Friends.

Not all my gardening friends are human. Many are regular visitors having no particular interest in a garden of flowers or vegetables. Two friends live in the garden to eat and rest, are more active during the night, and while it's raining. I am doing other things during those times but now and then I see them wiggling or hopping. They are my garden caretakers; to make the soil fertile and to rid of undesirable insect pests.

My other friends use the garden as a playground. That not what I intended it to be but they have different ideas. They romp and tumble around, dashing here and there, on and around stem, leaf, and blossom. They don't care as long as it involves fun. No vegetable or flower is safe from these friends, including something as sturdy as Asparagus. Presented here are my small friends.

Earthworms – Lumbricus terrestris



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What is not to like about a friend who lives in damp dirt and mud, squirms and covered in slime? For a gardener, this is one true friend. They are nature's method of recycling and plowing garden and farm soil.

There are many earthworm species throughout the world. For my garden, a smaller type called "red fishing worms" (or common earthworms) burrows through the garden soil horizontally. They prefer to eat wet soil which contains lots of goodies. They do not become as large as Nightcrawlers. This larger species prefers to burrow into the lawn soil vertically.

After heavy rains, Nightcrawlers will emerge from their tubular burrows at night and crawl in the grass to search for dead leaves, cut grass, and other plant material. When found, they drag it underground to eat it. They also look for a mate during this time. Killing two birds with one stone. Oh, sorry – I shouldn't mention the subject of birds around earthworms.

Take a child outside after an evening rain and with the aid of flashlights (torches) aim the light toward the ground. You will see the earthworms suddenly jerk back into the safety of their burrows. They have no eyes but can detect light with special nerves along their elongated bodies.

Try to catch them; it's difficult to do. Teach a child the worm squirms and wriggles to escape. And that messy, icky slime? They call it mucus and aids the worm in moving in the soil, keeps their bodies wet (otherwise they will dry out and die) and also to make a horrible tasting meal for a hungry predator. Imagine a mouthful of slime. How disgusting!

The great English naturalist Charles Darwin once wrote: "*... it may be doubted if there are any other animals which have played such an important part in the history of the world as these lowly organized creatures.*" Teach a child all earthworms are valuable to make garden soil fertile and plants grow better. Their burrows also aerate the soil so plant roots can breathe.

They may look and feel disgusting, but earthworms are essential to make our garden and farm crops grow well. Let's think of them as one of Mother Nature's super-heroes.

My Kittens



Asparagus is not one of the favorite food plants for children (and adults), but the tall, thick tangle of fronds and stems can become a cat's version of a trampoline or a bounce house.

During one enjoyable summer, three little kittens used the asparagus patch as a playground. The kittens in the above photo are, from left to right, Mr. Whiskers, Zika, and Thorn. I named Zika after the tropical virus transmitted by mosquitoes, and Thorn is short for "a thorn in one's side." He is always getting into trouble.

You are probably wondering why these kittens are in the asparagus patch. They decided the large clump of asparagus would make a great trampoline to play on. One of them discovered it could jump or climb into the thick fronds and the others followed. They were near the top of

the plants bouncing around while chasing each other. No kidding! The thicket of matted stems and leaves could support their weight.

I caught their attention for a split second (the maximum time for kittens to stand still) to take the above photo. Kittens love an enjoyable romp in any garden, sometimes becoming a little too rambunctious with the plants. Gardens should always be fun places for our furry friends – and us.

Toads – *Bufo americanus*



I don't care what some people say – toads and frogs look beautiful. They have a serious face and pleasant personality. The toad (above) was on my brick patio after I moved a potted plant and took an up-close and personal photo. We got nose to nose (well, nose to the lens) and took a picture of its stoic face. What a thoughtful or contemplative face.

Gardeners should try to keep toads in their flower and vegetable gardens. They will eat many harmful bugs (during the night), and this is beneficial for any outdoor area. If you or your child find a toad, give it a good home with an enclosure, such as an inverted, broken clay flower pot with an entrance hole. It makes a cozy, and moist home during the day. Toads still need moisture and can get it from the bug-food they eat but also enjoy a romp around the garden during an evening rain.

Unfortunately, they feed on my other friend, the earthworm, during this time.

Teach children that, contrary to an old belief, toads do not give you warts when handled. They may pee in your hand but, hey, little animals and children have occasional accidents. A toad can be a great small pet to live in any garden.

Really Wicked Veggies!

I don't believe it. I am looking at seed catalogs with photos of little children, smiling from ear to ear, holding up vegetables. I can't keep laughing to myself wondering how the photographers had the kiddies hold plants and have big smiles. I am sure it wasn't bribery. "Hey, kid. Hold up these carrots, and you get to eat them all." No, it won't happen.

Kids and vegetables are like oil and water; each separate from the other – unless you mix things up by providing weird looking veggies. Then children might take another look and wonder "why are those yucky green beans purple?" There, you got their interest. Do this a few more times and vegetables will not be so repulsive.

The Color Purple

Purple is the new green in today's garden vegetable world. It seems every vegetable and fruit are turning blue or purple. Why is that? There are at least two explanations: First, purple veggies are more nutritious. They contain high levels of a natural chemical called anthocyanins. This compound is crucial as an antioxidant which helps to protect our bodies potentially from cancer. This idea is a generalized statement, but anthocyanins are vital for us, especially, children.

The second explanation for the rise of purple veggies is "they're different!" From a marketing perspective, "different" can mean good for business.

We are learning more about the benefits of a diet rich in anthocyanins and carotenoid pigments. Purple may be the color for better health. However, will children like the new color of boring orange carrots, potatoes, tomatoes, and beans? Probably not. Find them interesting? Maybe. It all depends on you. Are you willing to grow these new varieties? I hope the answer is yes. By doing so, children will eventually become more interested in growing and eating them. There are no guarantees – only hope.

Purple vegetables and fruits are not a new development in gardening. In fact, for some plants, they were originally this color. Many heirloom tomatoes and carrots (or wild types) began as being purple. Then, due to mutations or a mixing of genes, an orange or yellow form would show up and make new gardeners say "WOW! I have to grow more of these." And so, they did. They would cultivate an orange or red strain more until they now consider this normal.

Today, the pendulum swings back to re-raising the old style purple colored veggies. Many purple (or dark blue) tomatoes and carrots are available in many seed catalogs.



Blue potatoes, such as this **Adirondack Blue** variety, have been around for a few years now, but they are still uncommon to find in many areas. They are light blue when mashed. A beautiful dark purple Sweet Potato called **Molokai Purple** grows in Hawaii but rarely offered elsewhere. This variety has higher amounts of antioxidants than the regular orange types. Both varieties make excellent purple fries and creamy blue mashed potatoes. I wonder how your child would react if offered these for dinner? It may surprise you!



Some children love to eat green beans. I love them except frozen ones. Freezing does something weird to the flavor. That may be a reason some children find them unpalatable.

If you want to surprise young (and older) gardeners grow varieties called **Amethyst**, **Royal Burgundy**, and **Velour**. Growers also call them French green beans. The plants are typically green, but the beans are purple. However, they lose the purple when cooked but keep a dark-green color. One other benefit of being purple is they are easier to pick. The purple pods have excellent contrast against the green leaves.

Many garden centers and vegetable catalogs now offer seeds of these varieties.

Conclusion

Children are born gardeners. They have an eye for beauty, a curious mind and the willingness to learn about the world around them. Then something silly happens. They grow up and lose these qualities. Why? Maybe it is because we adults quickly lose that interest, and we try to make children grow up too fast. Children need to grow up at their individual speed.

A child's first experience in a garden should be memorable. It's challenging to get them excited, so we have to find inspirations. It can be big or weird-looking or something easy to grow. Maybe it is all the different bugs that live in a garden. Some children may like to raise some unusual vegetables.

Give them fun reasons to be in a garden. Go outside with them and look at wings of a butterfly with a magnifying lens, and show them how to sow, grow and harvest vegetables. Show them that work can be fun while being in a garden.

A garden is a big classroom. Educators do not teach life's essential lessons in schools but learned here. Please take the time to instruct a child about nature. Allow them a chance to develop a green thumb and be proud of this life-changing accomplishment. It happened to you and me – hopefully, it will happen to them.

Thank you for reading this ebook.

I hope you have enjoyed learning about these methods to inspire children about the pleasures and wonders of gardening and nature.

Please visit my author website of <https://gedwinvarner.com> concerning my other gardening ebooks and contact information.

About the Author

G. Edwin Varner grew up on a farm helping his father in the crop fields and assisting his mother in the flower and vegetable gardens. This early experience and learning led him to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with a minor in Botany.

For twenty years he successfully owned and operated a fragrant flower mail-order nursery. Unlike most mail-order nurseries publishing colorful but expensive pictorial catalogs, his frugal catalog extensively described the flowers he grew. He once said, "I write a thousand words worth a picture in my catalogs." Today, he has the same style of writing (thankfully with fewer words) through a variety of enjoyable and informative ebooks. This time, the ebooks include color photos of each flower.

He encourages you to cultivate something unique and beautiful in your gardens. His motto is "read about it, see it, grow it, and enjoy it!"

G. Edwin Varner lives in a rural area of northeastern Ohio, USA.