



Making the most of the spring garden

The pleasure of collecting, everything from coins and cars to silk postcards from WWI is universal. So is the power of the ‘free’ giveaway.

We have all become caught up in the collectibles marketing exercise between two major supermarket retailers over the last months. The complexity of the whole thing is greater than at first appears. This complexity filled almost an entire episode of [Gruen](#) on ABC TV recently (details below). Analysis of the promotions by panel members who are actively involved in the advertising and marketing industry gives fascinating insights into this strategy.

I object to the licence that advertising and such promotions have, particularly when aimed at children. But it is good to see a shift to engage children in active participation in growing things.

Like the other promotions, this one has been enthusiastically embraced by both children and adults. We can work with this.

Gardening as a resource

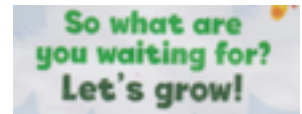
The 'giveaway' – after spending \$30 in-store – includes a small growing kit, instructions, and what is described as an interactive storybook.

These materials provide opportunities for using a range of literacy skills purposefully in an authentic context, and are a model for further investigations into growing things.

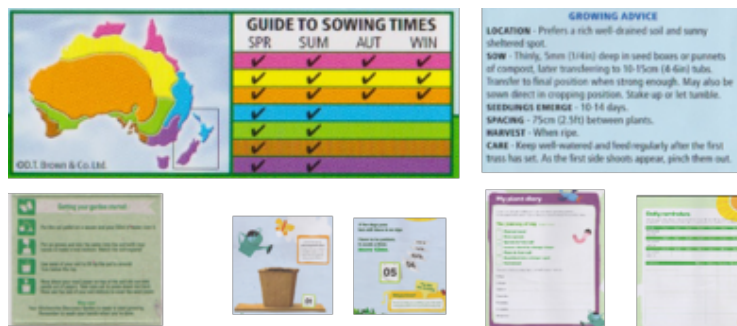
Packs of seeds contain information and guidance for sowing and caring for plants, and in the case of vegetables, to harvest.

Literacy skills

- reading and interpreting information from planting and growth charts
- reading and responding to a variety of types of text – persuasive, imaginative and instructional
- planning
- following instructions
- interpreting images and icons, and visual representations of time passing
- persuasive language features as models – extended noun groups, wordplay, rhetorical questions, puns, sentence fragments used for effect
- measuring
- recording information



The use of these skills consolidate the practical application of literacy knowledge across the curriculum.



GUIDE TO SOWING TIMES

SPR	SUM	AUT	WIN
✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓	✓

GROWING ADVICE

LOCATION - Prefers a rich well-drained soil and sunny sheltered spot.

SOW - Thinly, 5mm (1/4in) deep in seed boxes or punnets of compost, later transferring to 10-15cm (4-6in) tubs. Transfer to final position when strong enough. May also be sown direct in cropping position. Stake up or let tumble.

SEEDLINGS EMERGE - 10-14 days.

SPACING - 75cm (2 1/2 ft) between plants.

HARVEST - When ripe.

CARE - Keep well-watered and feed regularly after the first truss has set. As the first side shoots appear, pinch them out.

Large, cherry-sized fruits which are deliciously sweet. An excellent cropper, lovely in salads.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary develops through repeated use in appropriate and authentic contexts. Here, the opportunity to use both technical and general terminology for growing plants happens mostly out of the classroom.

The words that students need for success in learning are those:

- which represent generalisations and concepts
- are widely transferable across subjects
- having a range of possible uses
- used in literary and school texts

Growing things gives students frequent and repeated contextualised use of words which fit the criteria above.

The following are taken directly from the seed packs and instructions referenced. They may need demonstration throughout the planting and growing process to make sure understanding in that context is secure.

Words with broad applicability (Tier 2)			Technical vocabulary around growing things (Tier 3)
pellet	patient	well-watered	seedling
harvest	memorise	sprout	cropper
expand	transfer	glisten	punnets
location	sown	nutrients	stake-up
thrive	emerge	fruits of your labour	truss
growth stages	well-drained soil	spacing	side shoots
sprout	compost	research	potting mix
sheltered			herb

These are words and terms we can use in the classroom and reference back to the plantings and growing activities our students are involved in at home.

Sustainability

Working with plants helps to address the first key concept of the Australian Curriculum on sustainability: exploring the interdependent and dynamic nature of systems that support all life on Earth and our collective wellbeing

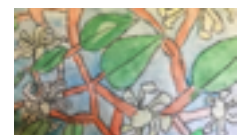
[Australian Curriculum Cross-curriculum priorities: Sustainability](#)

Building on the learning

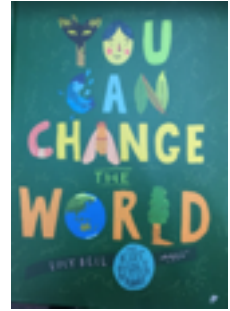
Spring has sprung, and our shopping centres are filled with pots of greenery, shrubs, seedlings and gardening equipment. A quick look around shows how others are getting into the growing frame of mind.

We can take the learning further:

- The beginning of term is a good time to start small plantings in the classroom. The 10 weeks of term is just enough time to establish plants in pots. These can be taken home as gifts.
- Claim a section of the school garden for your class. Students select vegetables if you want to harvest before the end of term, or hardy shrubs that can survive the holiday break, particularly over the summer. Get parents involved.
- Nurseries and variety stores have a wide variety of seeds, 'plants in pots', terrarium starters, and so on, with everything provided. These can be used as models for students to prepare their own versions – such as upturned eggshells with a painted face, soil and radish seeds to grow as 'hair'.
- Starter kits make excellent gifts for the class.
- Set homework that requires students to photograph and identify plants around their home, in parks, or used for street plantings. Have reference books/apps etc available for identification.



- Make a map of the school grounds and mark the plants.
- Draw/paint the plants, particularly as seedlings grow.
- Local councils employ an environmental officer. They can provide information on noxious weeds, poisonous plants, and ways to plant to 'birdscape' gardens, bushcare projects, local birds and animals.
- Look more broadly at sustainability – the Greta Thunberg influence is worthy of investigation. See Australian Lucy Bell's *You can change the world*, published September 2019. Growing things features.
- "Start your own veggie patch with Aussie grown seedlings for just \$1.99 — that's 15 seedlings for \$30," a large supermarket chain announced in a Facebook post.
- One of the large hardware chains is offering one of 15 free seedling pots in-stores, as part of the store's school holiday workshops for children on October 1 and 3.



References

ABC iView Gruen, Series 11 Episode 1 at <https://iview.abc.net.au/show/gruen> (3:46 to 21:18 minutes)

Australian Government Weed Species A-Z at <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/weedspeciesindex.pl?id=701>

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., Kucan, L (2013) *Bringing Words to Life* 2nd Edition Guildford Press NY

D.T. Brown Tomato 'Sweetie' seeds pack

UNGA Woolworths Discovery Garden 2019

Photographs: A. Gray

