

# Activity Guide

## Build Vocabulary

Providing a simple explanation of words that a child may not be familiar with can help build their language skills. You can describe the meaning of a word, point to an illustration, or use your tone of voice to convey the word's meaning.

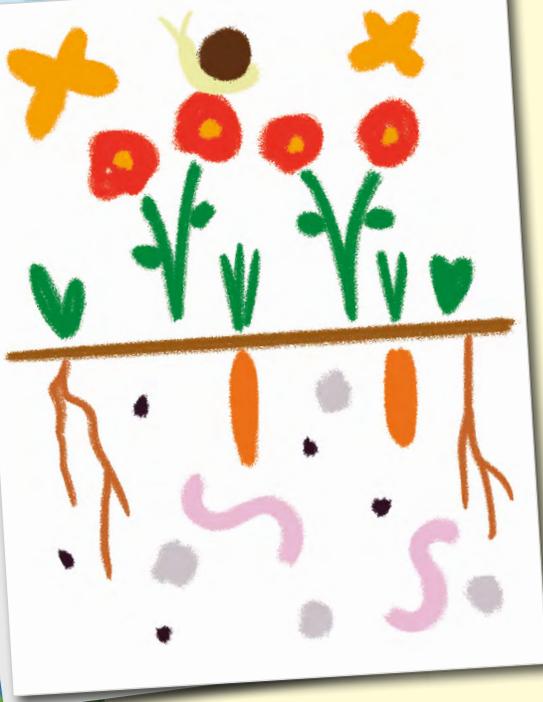
Here are some words to talk about while you read *See Marcus Grow*:

- **Prepare:** to get ready
- **Prune:** to cut off or remove parts of a plant to make it healthier
- **Fertile:** rich in nutrients and good for growing plants
- **Soil:** the dirt that plants grow in
- **Harvest:** to pick fruits and vegetables when they're ready to eat
- **Patient:** being able to wait a long time without getting angry
- **Curious:** wanting to know more about something



## Draw Your Dream Garden

Using pieces of paper, have children draw what they would like to grow in their own garden. Start by asking them to draw a brown line down the middle of the paper and tell them that this is the soil. Now, ask them to draw what is growing above that line in the garden—leaves, stems, and flowers. Have them include plants whose fruit or vegetables they would be excited to eat. Don't forget other creatures, like birds or a friendly snail. Below the line, ask them to add what they would see in the soil—the roots, a seed about to sprout, and friends living in the soil, like earthworms! If they would like, have them write about or label in labeling what they've drawn.



# Activity Guide

## MORE IDEAS!



### Make Nature Prints

Let children experiment with printing on paper using natural items (such as cut vegetables, flowers, leaves, seed pods, and pinecones) and paint. Ask them to think about the shapes and textures as they print: “Why do you think the seeds are in the middle of the apple?” or “Do you think the shape of that flower helps butterflies drink its nectar?” Point out the parts of the items they’re printing with (leaves, seeds, stems, petals, roots) and imagine together how each part helps that plant grow. Encourage children to experiment with multiple items and to compare the shapes made by each one.

### Garden Gratitude Handprint Tree Activity

Create a collaborative gratitude tree. Using brown paint or brown crayons, children make handprint tree trunks on large paper (this could be paper bags, cardboard, or taped-together printer paper). Then, just like Marcus learned to appreciate each part of his grandmother’s garden, children dip their fingers in green paint to add fingerprint leaves while sharing one thing they’re grateful for about nature—perhaps the apples they eat, the flowers they smell, or the shade trees provide. The child can write down what they are grateful for or the adult can write down the child’s words for them.

### Marcus’s Garden-to-Table Snack Creation

Inspired by the book’s ending in which Marcus and his grandmother make fresh salsa together, children can create simple garden snacks using available fruits and vegetables like cherry tomatoes, cucumber slices, or apple pieces. Just as Marcus learned that plants provide nourishment, children wash and arrange produce on paper plates while discussing how each food grew from a seed in someone’s garden. They can make their own simple salsa using mashed tomatoes or create fruit salads, all while practicing vocabulary from the book and connecting the foods they’re eating to how plants grow.



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## MORE IDEAS!

### Marcus's Growing Garden Movement Game

Ask children to act out the plant life cycle from the book by starting as tiny seeds curled up on the floor, slowly sprouting by reaching up, growing taller as plants by stretching their arms wide like leaves, and then finally bearing fruit by pretending to hold tomatoes or mangoes like Marcus discovered. As they move through each stage, the children should call out what plants need—water (wiggling fingers), sunshine (reaching up), and love (hugging themselves)—reinforcing the book's message that plants and children both need care to grow. The activity can be extended by having the children go through the cycle again, both faster and slower.



### Further Reading Options

#### Books about gardening and spending time in nature:

***A Crown for Corina***  
by Laekan Zea Kemp

***Grandma Lena's Big Ol' Turnip***  
by Denia Lewis Heste

***Jayden's Impossible Garden***  
by Mélina Mangal

***Khalil and Mr. Hagerty and the Backyard Treasures***  
by Tricia Springstubb

***Ruby's Birds***  
by Mya Thompson

***Saturdays at Harlem Grown***  
by Tony Hillery

***A Seed Is Sleepy***  
by Dianna Hutts Aston

***Tokyo Digs a Garden***  
by Jon-Erik Lappano

***The Ugly Vegetables***  
by Grace Lin

***Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt***  
by Kate Messner



# Classroom Reading and Activity Guide



## Make Nature Prints

Set up printing stations with trays containing assorted natural materials for each table or group of 4–6 children. Include cut vegetables (apples, bell peppers, celery), flowers, leaves of varying shapes and sizes, seed pods, pinecones, and other textured natural items. Provide shallow paint dishes, paper, and damp cloths for cleanup at each station.

Have children explore printing by dipping natural items in paint and pressing them onto paper. As they work, circulate between groups and engage them in observations about the shapes and textures they're creating. Ask open-ended questions, like "What do you notice about the pattern inside this apple?" or "How is the print from this leaf different from that flower?" Point out plant parts they're discovering through their prints—the veins in leaves, seeds in fruit centers, spiral patterns in pinecones—and discuss how each part serves the plant.

## Marcus's Garden Memory Circle

Children sit in a circle and take turns acting out one thing they remember from Marcus's grandmother's garden for the group to guess—whether it's digging like worms, buzzing like bees, swaying like plants in the wind, or pretending to water seedlings. When children need some help, open to one of the pages of the book to spark ideas. After children have guessed, reinforce observations about nature with additional language, such as "Those worms look like they are really helping make space for the plants' roots to grow!" or "I'm so glad the bees joined us, otherwise we wouldn't have as many tomatoes to harvest soon."

