

# Editor's Note

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As you'll read in the feature article in this issue—which is being published at the height of the U.S. gardening season—people all over the country are rolling up their sleeves and getting their hands dirty working in gardens. And as gardening grows in popularity, gardens are popping up in some unlikely places—on city streets and next to government buildings, for example.

What used to be a hobby for people with a lot of extra space in their yards and extra time on their hands is becoming a lifestyle choice for those who want to grow their own vegetables to ensure good quality and taste. People everywhere are digging up parts of their yards to make gardens, and those without yards are trying to secure plots in community gardens. (A condo-dwelling friend of mine recently signed up for a community garden in her area only to learn she'll be on a waiting list for three years—a sure sign of the popularity of gardening.) Even children are learning about gardening as they plant vegetables in their schoolyards and later harvest them to make healthy lunches.

I myself did some gardening as a child, but not at school. My family had a vegetable garden in our yard. I think that had something to do with my mom having grown up on a farm because none of our neighbors were growing lettuce, tomatoes, beans, beets, or carrots in their yards. My family grew all of those vegetables and more. I liked watering the garden (weeding not as much) and, of course, picking the vegetables. Nothing tasted so sweet on a summer day as a tender young carrot tugged from the garden, rinsed with the hose, and munched right away.

My childhood enthusiasm for gardening dimmed during many years of apartment living. But in recent years I've helped out in friends' gardens. That has reminded me that gardening puts you close to nature, but not always in the best way. Any number of creatures—earthworms, ants, centipedes, spiders, slugs—can turn up when you start digging around in a garden. And other insects—flies, mosquitoes, gnats, and wasps—might fly by to annoy you while you work.

But if you can ignore the pests, the effort of hoeing and digging and weeding, out in the sunshine and fresh air, can bring a sense of contentment. And there will be more satisfaction when the plants are grown, and fresh herbs and vegetables are ripe for the picking.

I hope our readers will find a similar sense of pleasure in reading about gardening and in picking Classroom Activities to share with their students.