

NEW! We hope you'll file this issue for future use!

Gardening

Tipsy Pots

Potting soil
Flowers of choice
A pair of strong adult hands!

1 large clay planting pot
5 medium clay planting pots
1 steel rebar, at least 4 feet in length

Have an adult sink the rebar at least a foot into the ground. Dig a ring around your chosen area (don't forget the better "doorway"). The ring of dirt should be no wider than eight inches. Toss away unwanted clumps of grass then sprinkle in well. Plant your packet of sunflower seeds according to the spacing on the packet. Follow the packet instructions. Within a few months your kids will have a fun Sunflower Playhouse in which to frolic!

enjoy your new Tipsy Pots!

Nature's Sunflower Playhouse

1 small bag of mushroom compost
Packet of sunflower seeds
Gardening tools
Flat area of grass about 6 feet in circumference

Clear area of rocks and bumps. The smoother the better since your kids will be spending a lot of time in their hideaway. Dig a ring around your chosen area (don't forget the better "doorway"). The ring of dirt should be no wider than eight inches. Toss away unwanted clumps of grass then sprinkle in well. Plant your packet of sunflower seeds according to the spacing on the packet. Follow the packet instructions. Within a few months your kids will have a fun Sunflower Playhouse in which to frolic!

Web Picks for Gardening

The Library has selected reputable websites that may be helpful in your gardening efforts. Head to ppld.org and look under the Research column (on the left-hand side of the web page) for **Recommended Websites**. There is a search box at the top of the next screen. Type in "garden" and click "search." You will now have at least 50 websites to peruse.

The **Pick Your Own** link told me that as of December 2010 in El Paso County, there was one "Pick Your Own" farm, and they grew rhubarb. But if you are willing to drive to Penrose, Colo., in Fremont County, there are three "Pick Your Own" orchards, and one location grows blackberries. I may drive down there next summer.

National Gardening Association has a wealth of information on its website. I like the "Regional Gardening Report" for information that is helpful to my area. Check out the "Kids Gardening" area, and look in the "Teacher's Room" for some interesting ideas for using food and gardens as topics for study. The "Family Room" area is also chock-full of ideas and simple guidelines for working with children in a garden setting.

Trees in Colorado Springs is a great source for determining what tree to plant. The list is of street trees, and acknowledges that some poor street trees might be good in your yard. The far right columns tell you why a tree is objectionable, as well as other comments you need to be aware of.

Xeriscape sites are there for both the Colorado Extension Service and Colorado Springs Utilities. The sites are very helpful, but perhaps a field trip to real gardens would help.

Great Books for Green-Thumb Wannabes

- Picture Books (J-Easy)
- A Garden of Opposites* by Nancy Davis
- Yucky Worms* by Vivian French
- Flora's Surprise* by Debi Gliori
- The Good Garden* by Katie Smith Milway
- Children's J-Nonfiction
- The Ultimate Step-by-Step Kids' First Gardening Book* J 635 H269U
- Organic Gardening for Kids* J 635.0484 S368O
- Garbage Helps Our Garden Grow* J 635.048975 G548G
- Kids' Container Gardening* J 635.986 K92K
- Adult Nonfiction
- The Garden Organic Guide to Making Compost* 631.875 P361G
- All New Square Foot Gardening* 635 B287S
- The Vegetable Gardener's Book of Building Projects* 635 V422
- Western Garden Book of Edibles* 635 W527
- Native Plants for High-Elevation Western Gardens* 635.9528 B977N

Also, take a look at the quarterly magazine, **Zone 4**, which is geared specifically toward our short growing season.

Tell us what you think! We welcome topical ideas to enhance your educational endeavors. Contact gsohns@ppld.org



HOMESCHOOL CONNECTIONS

An Educational Resource Tool

Spring 2011

How Does Your Garden Grow?

There are over 1,000 different titles on gardening to be found in Pikes Peak Library District's Catalog and all are free to check out with your library card. Whether you want to learn more about what flowers or vegetables will grow in our harsh, hot, and dry summer climate, or how to build a low garden wall, there is a book (or two or three) to help you somewhere in the Library District.

In your own yard, look for a sunny spot. If you are growing vegetables, you need at least eight hours of sunshine each day. Big containers on the patio or driveway, with the right amount of care (and lots of water), can be perfect garden locations.

If you are new to town, count on learning to garden all over again. The last frost date in the spring is roughly May 13 - 18, and the first frost date in the fall is around September 26. That leaves a 134-day growing season. This does not account for hail, cold wet days, and broiling hot and dry conditions – each has less than optimal effects on whatever you are trying to grow. Look for plants that mature quickly (under 60 days), have smaller fruit, and that may include varieties that you are not familiar with.

The **Colorado Extension** website and office are excellent sources of information. There are hundreds of Colorado State Extension fact sheets available, and all can be printed from home. Look for the "print fact sheet" icon to get a good copy. Fact sheet number 7.220 titled "Colorado Gardening: Challenge to Newcomers" is a great place to start.

PlantTalk Colorado is a service of the Colorado State Extension, and offers plant advice in both printed and spoken script forms. Your older, auditory learners will love to listen, and you can print the information for the visual family members.

Plantselect.org selects plants that are adapted for Colorado growing conditions. While these are ornamental plants, it is worth including them in any landscaping plans.

There are a few **community gardens** in Colorado Springs. Check out Pikes Peak Urban Gardens (www.ppugardens.org) to find out what is still active. Bear Creek, Old Farm, Deerfield Hills, and Faith Covenant are the biggest. Perhaps you want to go work on a farm and share the product. Pikes Peak Community Foundation's website at ppcf.org is a great resource to learn about local **Community Supported Agriculture** locations and programs.

Try to find a sunny spot or a flowerpot for your child to grow something in. Read a few of the nearly 100 books in the Children's collection about gardening to find plants and projects that are age appropriate. Prepare yourself and your child for both success and failure – you may do *everything* right, and a hail storm can wipe it all out in five minutes. Keep a simple family gardening journal and let anyone write about what they observe in the garden. You might note the appearance of new flower buds, insects, or butterflies, for example. Add some photographs and you will have completed a wonderful book that everyone can read and remember your summer gardening adventures.



To contact PPLD's Homeschool Committee, please email gsohns@ppld.org.



The BookShelf

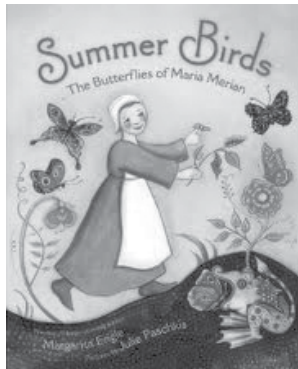
Great new books for inquisitive kids!

Farm by Elisha Cooper (2010)

Spend a year on the farm and see what happens at different seasons. Watch the children as they go about their chores, and learn what they like to do for fun. Author includes a glossary for city folks. (All ages. Science, social studies.)

Summer Birds: The Butterflies of Maria Merian

by Margarita Engle (2010)
Travel back to the Middle Ages and learn the many misconceptions people had about butterflies. One little girl studied insects, drew the life cycle, and knew categorically that "spontaneous generation" of living insects from mud was not true. (All ages. Science, history.)



LMNO Peas by Keith Baker (2010)

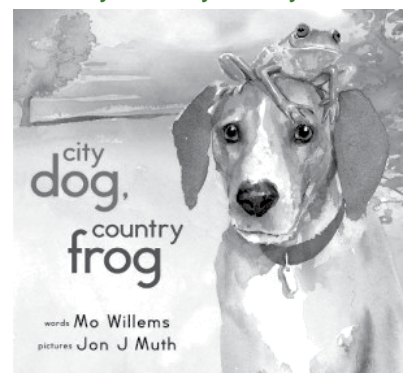
Garden peas use occupations to cover the alphabet. Great for young learning the alphabet, as each letter is BIG, and older kids can contribute other occupations that start with the letter. (All ages. Literacy, vocabulary.)

Animal Crackers Fly the Coop by Kevin O'Malley (2010)

This may look like a picture book for preschoolers, but believe me, your older children will be the ones who get all the jokes. This is the traditional Brentown Musicians with a totally modern twist. (Ages 7 - 10. Folktales, literature.)

City Dog, Country Frog by Mo Willems (2010)

Here is another retelling, with such a gentle touch you may find yourself reading this again



and again to your preschoolers. The theme is friendship, the text is simple enough that a beginning reader will be able to pick out some of the words, and the illustrations will make you want to read this again. (Ages 4 - 9. Folktales, literature.)

Little-Known Secrets

This is the spot! Here is the column you will search out to find again and again. We at PPLD do not want to keep hidden gems like these to ourselves. On the contrary, here you will find the very nuggets we desire you to know about and use to your utmost advantage.

This issue shows off one of our language programs, found in our Database Resources. It is absolutely free to card-holding patrons and is very user-friendly. The program is called Mango. It is a self-teaching program using an Intuitive Language Construction format. The overall effectiveness of this type of learning allows you to use the material at your own pace, with several features for self guiding and improvement, all while covering four basic learning principles: vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and culture.

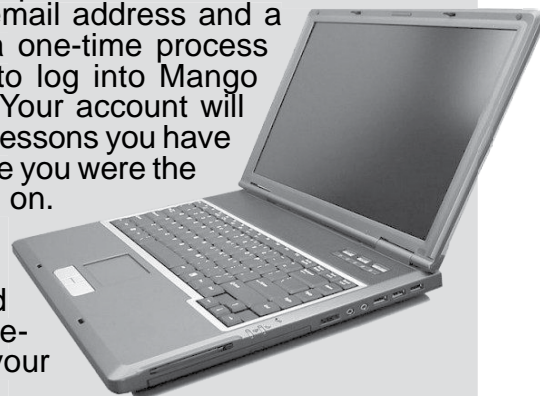
Mango offers 22 different languages. Wow! You could learn a new language every three months for the next six years! The program allows you to participate in the lessons at your own speed. If you need to repeat or refresh a lesson, you can click on that option. If you are not sure of the pronunciation or did not hear what the instructor said, simply move your cursor over the word or phrase and it automatically repeats, shows a phonetic spelling of the word, and allows you to record your own voice to aid with dialect inflections (if your computer is equipped with a microphone).

Another helpful tool included with the program is a translator box. This allows you to type words or phrases in English, then have it translated to the language of your choice (or vice versa.) It's a great way to see and hear different phrases not offered in the program or to practice what you know, for beginners to the advanced learner.

The site's graphics are beautiful and help portray the atmosphere of the culture you are learning about. Words and phrases are based on typical conversations you would have if traveling in that country. The comprehensive retention format of the program automatically teaches you grammar as you learn, applying it to your organic learning skills or long-term memory for easy recall.

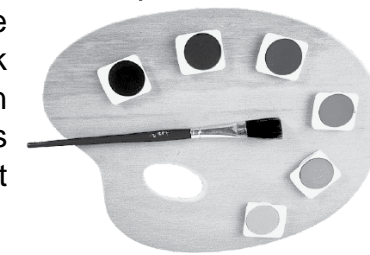
To get to Mango, click your cursor on Databases A-Z, found on the left side of the PPLD home page at ppld.org. Type "Mango language" in the search box (Your computer will need to have Adobe Flash to properly install the program). A log-on page will appear and you will have the option to create an account with your email address and a password. This is a one-time process and will allow you to log into Mango whenever you like. Your account will keep record of what lessons you have completed and where you were the last time you logged on.

What are you waiting for? Try Mango yourself, and then share this little-known secret with your friends and family.



4th Annual Homeschool Art Show

PPLD's annual Homeschool Art Show will be held during April 2011 in the Children's Department at East Library. All homeschooled students are encouraged to participate by submitting one piece of unframed artwork (drawing, painting, photograph, sculpture, etc.) the week of March 28, 2011. This is an art exhibit, not a juried show. Join us for a reception for artists, their families, and friends on Sunday, May 1, 2011, from 2 - 3 p.m. Artists should plan on taking their artwork home with them that day. For questions, contact Mary at 531-6333, x1407, or mgrant@ppld.org. Let's get creative!



Homeschool Hub

Homeschool Hub is the PPLD site especially for homeschoolers and their families! There you can find our database of local homeschool support groups, sign up for our email newsletter and booklist, and search for homeschool resources. From ppld.org, just click on **Homeschool Hub**.

Teen Volunteers Needed for Summer Reading Program!

If you are at least 12 years, consider being a Summer Reading Volunteer at your local library. Applications will be available before the end of March. We need volunteers to help with crafts, registering young kids for the program, and giving out prizes earned.

What's Happening at PPLD

Dr. Seuss Writing Contest

Kids ages 6 - 13 can write a Dr. Seuss Read-A-Like Book between 250 and 500 words long. Books must be turned in by March 31, and there are prizes! Find details at your local library, or contact Andrea at akussman@ppld.org.



TART — Teen Art Competition

Don't forget to take a look at the wonderful TART artwork displayed at various PPLD libraries during April 2011!

String Theory: Knitting and Crocheting for Teens

2 - 3:30 p.m. on Mon., March 21 and Tue., March 22, at Old Colorado City Library

Mountain of Authors

The 5th Annual Mountain of Authors will be held Saturday, April 2, 2011 from 12:30 - 6 p.m. at East Library. This year's panels of local authors will discuss getting your book published and paranormal fiction.

Featured Homeschool Family: The McKinney Family

How old are your children?
Ages 14, 12, and 9

Why did you decide to homeschool?
I heard a speaker talking about how God has given our children to us as a gift, and that homeschooling helps us build relationships with our children and equip them for real life. I knew then that this was something I was being called to do.

What curriculum do you use?
I have been an "eclectic" homeschooler, using a variety of curriculum to meet the changing needs of my children. I currently have students at the high school, middle school and elementary

levels. I use "Tapestry of Grace" as my main curriculum, along with Saxon Math, Apologia Science, Easy Grammar, Spelling Power, and foreign language (Latin).

What does your homeschool day look like?
For us, mornings work best to do our harder work. Over breakfast, we start with Bible and history discussions. Then we move into math, foreign language arts, and science before lunch. After lunch we have read-aloud time and more discussions. The day ends with reading assignments and household chores.

What are your children's interests and future goals?

It's fun to watch my children's interests change as they grow. My teenager is considering being a writer or missionary. My 12-year-old wants to teach art or choir and be a mommy. And my 9-year-old, who used to want to be a detective, now wants to be a wide receiver for the Dallas Cowboys ... and a singer!



Would you like to be a Featured Family? Contact Deborah at dworthey@ppld.org.