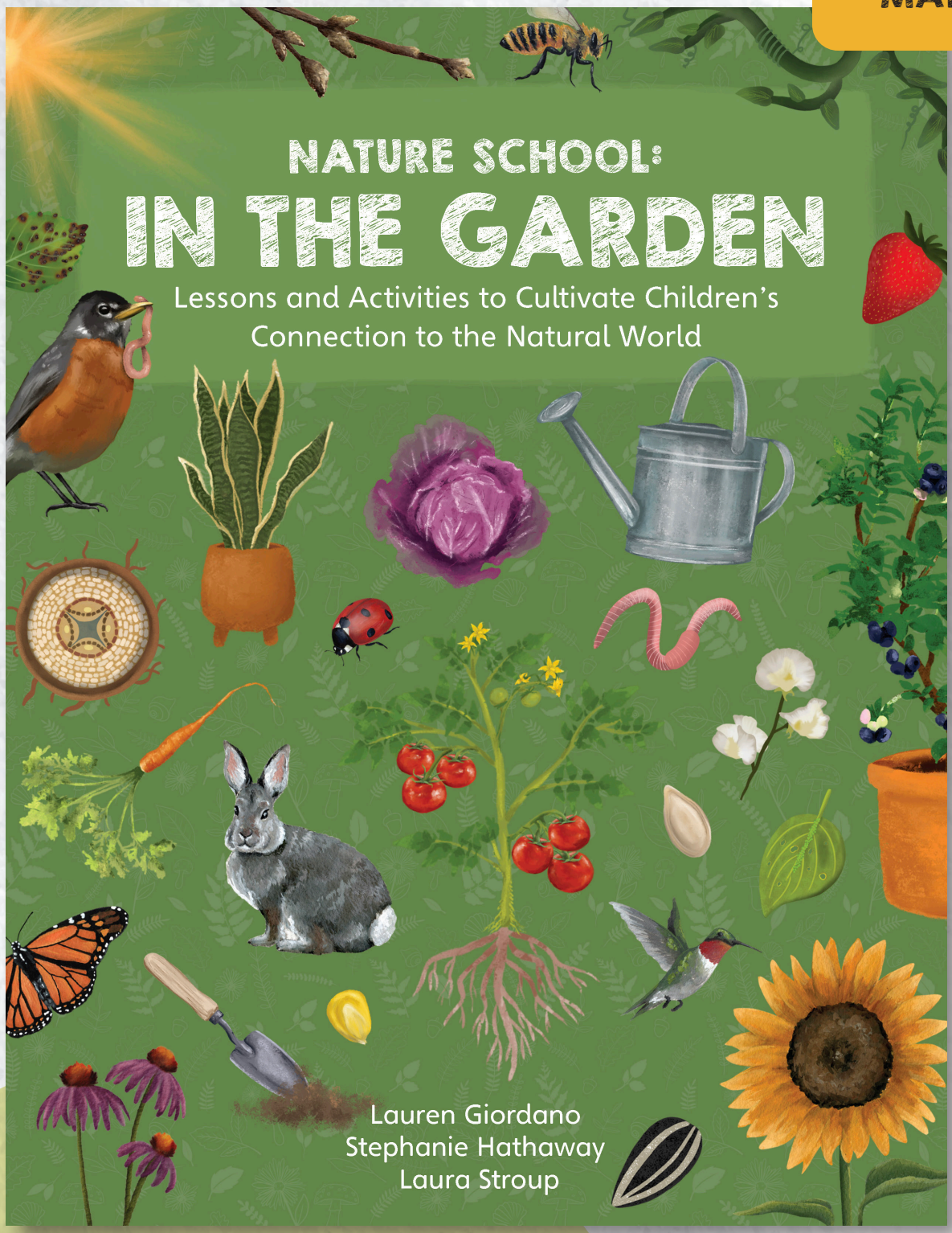
BONUS MATERIAL



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Nature School: In the Garden

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By Lauren Giordano, Stephanie Hathaway and Laura Stroup

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CHAPTER 1: THE GARDEN ECOSYSTEM

BONUS ACTIVITY

FOOD CHAIN STUDY

Take your nature journal out to the garden and choose one plant to study. Think about how this plant makes its own food and how it passes energy to wildlife in the garden. Spend a few minutes observing your plant and the surrounding area. Do you see any insects or animals that might eat the plant? In your nature journal, sketch a simple diagram of a food chain starting with your chosen plant. Add an animal that eats the plant, something that might eat that animal, and so on. Draw arrows between them to illustrate the flow of energy between each organism.

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CHAPTER 2: SOIL AND SUNLIGHT

BONUS ACTIVITY

COMPOST IN A JAR

You can make your own compost jar with just a few simple supplies. Why would you want to do this? Well, compost is great for many types of gardens because it has extra nutrients to help your plants grow. Compost is made of organic materials that are decaying and releasing substances, like nitrogen and phosphorus, into the soil at a steady rate. Keeping plants healthy and strong prevents them from being harmed by pests and weed growth. How can you make your own compost? You'll need a glass jar, so you can see the process. You'll also need soil from your garden, fruit and veggie scraps, water, dry leaves or grass clippings, and some thin, brown cardboard pieces leftover from packaging or paper towel tubes.

1. Cut up between one half and one cup of veggie and fruit scraps (fruit peels work well!) into small pieces, and add them to your jar.
2. Tear up the same amount of dried leaves and/or grass clippings, and add them to the jar.
3. Cut or tear your cardboard into small bits until you have around one cup full, and add them to the jar as well.
4. Take a large spoonful of your garden soil, and add it to the jar along with one half cup of water.
5. Shake it up! Mix everything together by putting the lid on your jar and giving it a shake.
6. Place your compost jar in a sunny spot with the lid OFF for several days. You can put a paper towel over the top of the jar and secure it with a rubber band to maintain airflow through the jar.
7. Use a spoon to stir the mixture every couple days. You can add water if it looks dry.
8. Watch the transformation take place as the microbes from the garden soil go to work, breaking down the different materials in the jar and releasing nutrients.
9. When it starts to look like soil, you can mix the compost into your garden as a natural fertilizer!

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CHAPTER 3: PLANT ANATOMY AND DIVERSITY

BONUS ACTIVITY

CLASSIFY YOUR HOUSEPLANT

Using the classification system that scientists use as described on page 62 of *In the Garden*, classify your favorite houseplant from its domain all the way to species. If you don't have any houseplants, choose one from your garden or yard. Fill in the following information about the plant of your choice. What other organisms are in the same taxa (categories) as your plant?

DOMAIN

KINGDOM

PHYLUM

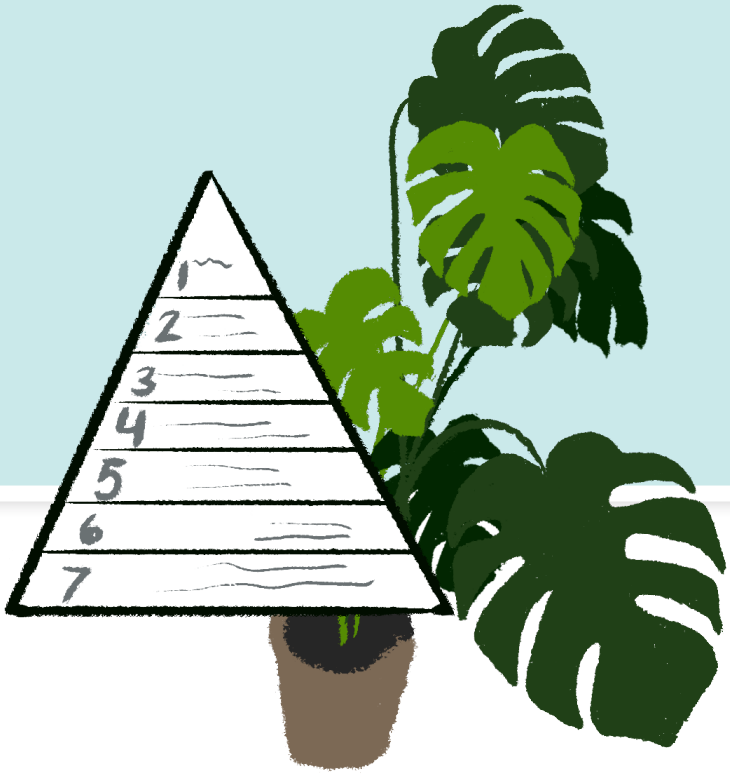
CLASS

ORDER

FAMILY

GENUS

SPECIES



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CHAPTER 4: THE PLANT LIFE CYCLE

BONUS ACTIVITY

SAVE YOUR SEEDS!

Once your plant has finished its life cycle, you can collect and save its seeds to grow it again next season. Seeds may be found inside fruits, pods, or flower heads. Methods for collecting, cleaning, and storing seeds vary with plant species, so you might need to do a little research. Store your seeds in envelopes, small bags, or jars, making sure they are completely dry. Don't forget to write the plant name and the date on the container!

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CHAPTER 5: BUILD AND GROW YOUR GARDEN

BONUS ACTIVITY

CREATE A GARDENING CALENDAR

In gardening, planning ahead is important! Create a customized calendar for ideal planting and harvesting times based on your climate. You can use a wall calendar, draw one in your nature journal, or simply list the dates in your journal. You'll want to refer to your garden zone and be sure to make note of first and last frost dates in your area. You can also look at the back of seed packets, the Farmers' Almanac, or a local gardening guide for guidance. You might even want to ask an experienced gardener for their timing tips. The goal is to record key planting and harvesting dates so your garden has the best chance for success!

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