

Children's Literature Reviews

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Don't throw it, grow it! : 68 windowsill plants from kitchen scraps.

Cataloging in Publication

North Adams, MA : Storey Pub., 2008.

p. cm.

Annotations:

Includes index.

The nitty-gritty of growing -- Plants from common vegetables -- Plants from fruits and nuts -- Plants from herbs and spices -- Plants from Latin America -- Plants from Asia.

Reviews:

Gwynne Spencer (Children's Literature)

Although it starts in a kitchen, this is not a cooking book. Rather, this little gem is a great resource for anyone (especially any teacher) who wants to introduce students to the world of sprouting seeds and growing them to mature plants. Originally published as *The Don't Throw It, Grow It Book of Houseplants* (Random House, 1977), with the Storey Touch it comes alive. As you read the directions for each kind of seed and how best to grow it, you are likely to think of Lois Ehlert's *Growing Vegetable Soup*, which could be another source of seeds to grow or an initial read-aloud. In addition to the obvious plants students could grow using the author's simple "sphagnum bag" (a zipper-locking bag with sphagnum moss) method, there are simple, encouraging directions for more exotic challenges like mango, ginger, papaya, avocado, and persimmon. Why grow just beans when your kids could be watching sesame seeds, mustard seeds and lentils? This informative book will educate adult readers, too; I did not know peanuts could be sprouted or that pomegranates would grow inside the house. Among the projects to encourage hopeful botanists, you will find sugar cane, taro, water chestnuts, and jicama. Who woulda thunkit? The directions are simple, but include botanical name, plant type (annual, perennial, bush, vine, bulb, tuber), whether the plant is a quick growth prospect or not, whether it can be grown from seed (almost all of them), and how much light is required. "What It Looks Like" is an important section about what each of the plants grows up to be, but unfortunately, the illustrations are only simple line drawings. Some projects are marked with an "easy" label, and these may be a good starting point for beginners. Each seed has a sidebar telling its country of origin and a small text section on eating it or cooking with it. The introductory text tells how the authors (both New Yorkers) would prowl around ethnic food stores back in the "old days" (before the invention of the local mega-mart), looking for exotic new possibilities in the food aisles of small groceries. The Pits (an organization of pit-growers and pit-savers of which Deborah Peterson is the founder, newsletter editor and tireless missionary mother) also known as the Rare Pit and Plant Council is acknowledged at the end of the book. I found this to be reassuring because the Council published a delightful calendar a couple of years back with detailed instructions for sprouting pits of the most exotic types, and it encouraged even a black-thumb like me to partake of the magic of seeds and growth. Like the book's cover announces, "It's kitchen magic!" Share that magic with your students. 2008, Storey Publishing, \$10.95. Ages 12 to adult.

Subjects:

[Window gardening.](#)

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