

Leading The Child To Love The World

How Do Gardening Teachers Relate The Practical Work Of The Garden To The Growing Child?

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Gardening Teacher

We live in a time of crisis. Crisis is good because it brings us to consciousness. We urgently need a new form of schooling. We need physical work in nature, in the garden and on the farm for the education of today. This is the Pedagogical Process of "Working with Nature" as a healing art. It is the goal of the earth to become the planet of love. This goal can be fulfilled by reconnecting mankind to the spiritual being of nature. Our farming education is an attempt at this reconnection by having the spiritual being of the child meeting the spiritual being of nature. Much of the work of the garden curriculum is a training in perception. When the child works with these natural processes, they are gaining an instinctive feeling for nature that allows them to make proper judgement. Also, when children can care for a piece of land together, they are finding better social habits.

We educate the child through the senses. We work hard to feed the senses, but not overwhelm the senses. The world of nature is a place to work where the senses are nurtured but not overwhelmed.

How can we best meet the child in his or her development using the garden as an environment to heal both the child and the earth?

What lessons are appropriate for what ages and why?

First Grade: Awe and Wonder

Before age 9, the child is still at one with his surroundings. In first grade the child has will-less thinking. They have associative thinking. They live in the gesture of awe and wonder. It is good to look towards flowers with this open gesture: Dandelion, Dahlia, Sunflower, Tulip. The importance of elemental beings in nature happens in a child's play. Finding and collecting treasures,



they have a natural urge and instinct to make gardens and fairy houses, doing the work of the elementals and therefore calling in these elemental beings. They can do grooming and raking, broadcasting wildflower seeds, all to assist the beings of the natural world that the child at this age is very close to. We need to ask "How are the elementals speaking to each other and man? 'What are nature's moods upon the earth?'"

Second Grade: Love Of Animals

In second grade the child is beginning to come more into their bodies. What are human strengths and weakness and how do the soul qualities in animals speak to the children? Interaction with animals and animal stories help give a picture of these strengths. Children, like the Dandelion, have their roots going deep down and are bringing up food for the earth. All the processes in nature are also taking place in man. Here we can play games of listening with all our senses, to the qualities and sounds of life, especially the animals. What is the squirrel doing? How are the birds different in winter? How are we, as teachers, seeing the living character of the elements and how can we bring these

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pictures to the children? Notice the howling wind, the summer breeze, feel the moist mud, therefore training the senses to perceive the natural world. What are the flowers of the season? What is in the life of the soil?

Third Grade -- Trust The World

In grade three the child has come to earth and makes his home here. The child experiences man's earthly activities in their archetypal forms, especially as worker and tradesmen. The farmer serves as the one who grows the food and cares for the animals, a picture of that which sustains our physical bodies. The practical work of the farm is the bridge that the child needs to trust us and trust the world, and therefore learn about themselves in a new way. Here are the real lessons of gratitude and responsibility. Bread, the staff of life, is taken from seed to loaf through planting, cultivating, harvesting, winnowing, threshing, grinding and baking. Here we ask the question: What are we doing for others in the community?

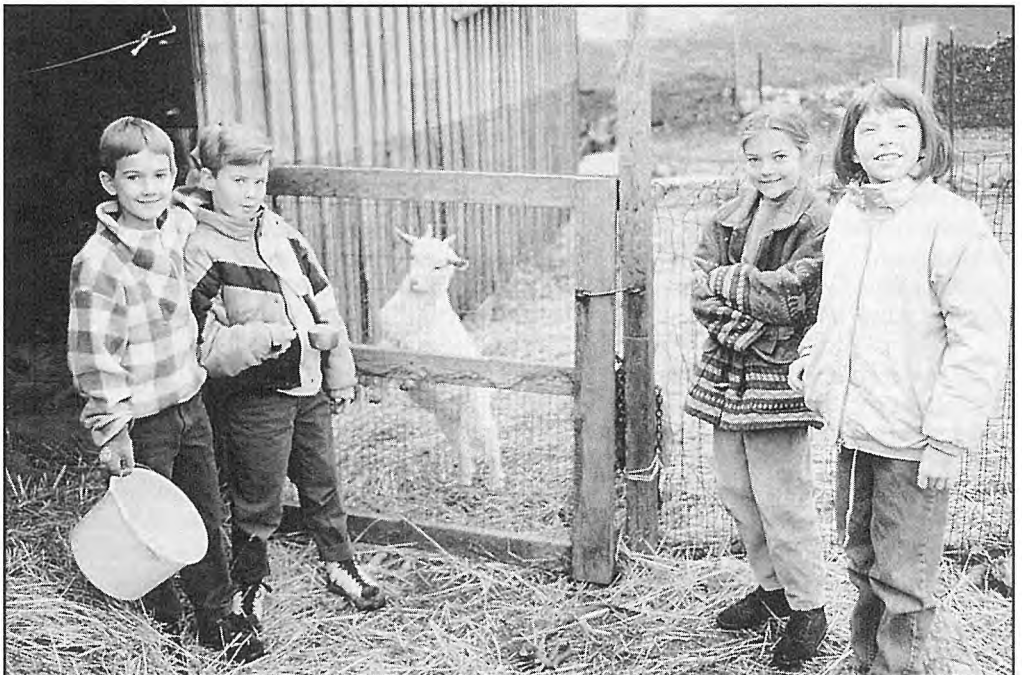
Fourth Grade: Learning To Observe

In fourth grade the ego and the will grow stronger. Through the study of animals they come to recognize these one-sided expressions found in human nature. Thoroughly getting to know, love and understand an

animal at this age can be a powerful and healing experience. Regular visits to the farm to offer care, cleaning, and do observation serve to deepen the relationship. Study of the digestion, the products of fertilization and decomposition create living pictures of processes that they are ready to work with. They can work with all the products of the animals from milk to cheese to yogurt. The child is now leaving imaginative thinking and now has an observational thinking.

Fifth Grade: Gaining Confidence

In grade five the child follows the development of the plant from stage to stage in their botany lessons and therefore acquires an instinctive feeling for organic evolution, a striving towards perfection. When a child is given an objective picture of growth which parallels his own, something is strengthened in his own being. Uncertainties in his own soul are overcome by learning that there is a pattern in the world and thus the child gains confidence in himself. Here we do drawing, drying, pressing, collecting to gain a relationship to plants and flowers. Questions like: What are the emotions of the flowers? How does this plant connect to the earth? Is the thistle angry? How, with its many seeds, does the poppy give a picture of reproduction? Is Sweet Woodruff diligent and orderly? We can give characterizations to plants:



the shy forest flowers bloom in dampness, while the spring flowers bloom in the midst of the sunny meadow. What birds and insects live around us? How is it with the bee and pollination or the transformation of the caterpillar to butterfly? How do the plant and insect communities organize themselves?

Sixth Grade:

From Authority To Science

In sixth grade, authority is replaced by the ideal which one comes to through scientific investigation. Glands and sexual organs are maturing and the limbs are growing. The sinues, fibrous tissues which connect muscles to bones, are now developed and strong enough for the child to use proper tools for hard work such as double digging, building compost piles and hauling and shoveling manure. The child can now connect cause and effect. The resistance that they meet with their physical bodies in hard work with the earth is a picture of the resistance they are meeting with authority, peers, and their changing selves. The spade and fork are important tools as they meet, penetrate and cultivate the soil. As they fall into adolescence and say goodbye to the spiritual world, they must find their physical strength and ideals that they can hold on to. We open their eyes to real seeing. Their work unites them with the world. The physical work arouses the child's craving for the intellectual and the intellectual work is furthered by the physical work.

We do tree studies by drawing leaves, wood, bark, shape, branch structure, buds, fruit, roots. What is the being of each tree? We grow herbs, vegetables and flowers. What are culinary and medicinal uses of plants, many uses dating back to Roman times? Flowers, through their scent, form, and color are of particular interest at this time with the birth of the astral body and the likes and dislikes taking over. Because the ego isn't born yet, concentration and authority help the child practice the work that will later be directed by the ego. The child seeks and meets resistance in order to further the growth of their will.

Seventh Grade: Appreciating Order

In seventh grade the child has made it through much of the criticalness and begins to find respect and appreciation for their teachers. They are willing to work, although the social dynamics of the entire group is very important. The study of health and nutrition comes alive in cooking. The growing of vegetables for cooking, and flowers that feed the soul give interest and purpose to one's work. At this time a sense for aesthetics is made manifest in the art of designing a garden plot and maintaining order. We also begin to work in market garden beds as we plant, cultivate, weed and harvest farm scale beds of vegetables. Pruning and chopping of wood, wood lot management and fencing are all begun. Processes of wool, from carding to spinning, to producing a hat, are taken up.

Eighth Grade: Independent Judgement

In grade eight we are encouraging logical thinking and free and independent judgement, with smaller groups working over a period of time at more specialized tasks. The preparation of soil mixes which includes measuring and sifting of many separate materials in proper amounts to form a whole is taken up. All aspects of greenhouse work from seed sowing, germination, propagation and seed saving are done. We study plant chemistry through cooking. Health and hygiene are practiced through making body and facial care products. World nutrition is experienced through cultural cooking. Now the harvesting of produce is done for the needy, as food is sent weekly to a food bank. The self absorption at this age is countered by real service work and by fully engaging one's physical body and working through one's resistance.

High School: Meeting The World

In the high school, gardening can be done in blocks. In 9th grade the child is asking: What is love? How can tending the earth help foster love in caring for all that lives around us? How can we best unite the high school student with the ideas and ideals that they are unconsciously longing for? The precision and attention that is called for in pruning is

The Gardening Teachers Of Northern California meet at least four times a year and are working hard to support each other in developing this very much needed work both for the development of the child and the care of the Earth.

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now appropriate in 9th grade.

We are enhancing the life-forces by removing what is not essential. Market gardening can continue, along with a deeper study of insects. Auto mechanics is appropriate, and can be introduced in relationship to work on farm machinery. Hedges, walkways, pools can all be constructed.

In 10th grade a study of the budding and grafting of fruit trees is taken up. What secret lies in the mystery of grafting? How does one bring the wild into the cultivated? What is the wildness in us, and how do we cultivate our passions and instincts? Studying streams, erosion and farm economics are appropriate. How does the farm relate to the community? How does money and budget, transport and marketing all function in farming? We can begin to use and discover the qualities in BD preparations and sprays. What spiritual qualities in these plants are needed and what effects are we seeking?

In 11th grade, production and market

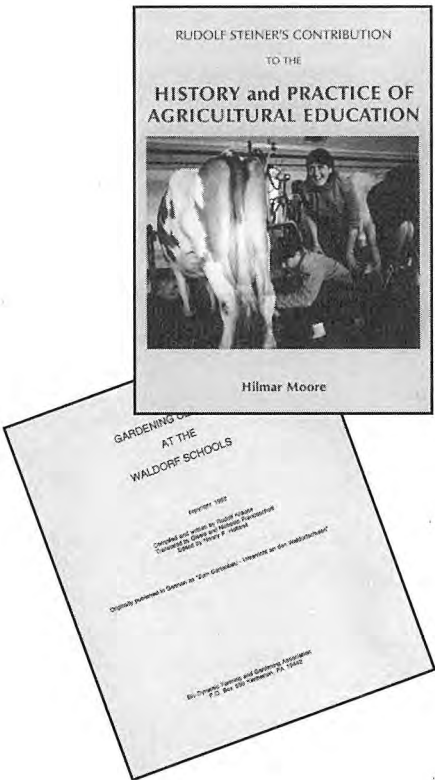
garden work should continue on a regular basis. A deeper study of plant associations, herbs and their healing qualities are studied. This is a good time to see agriculture in a rural area and even be able to take up a rural development project. The sciences have their place in the study of genetics, hybrids, plant breeding, but with a grounding in the natural processes of nature rather than in order to manipulate science for our own desires.

What is the difference between chemical, organic and Biodynamic farming?

In 12th grade the study of world ecology and the practice of BD landscaping is taken up. What is man's responsibility for the earth? What can I do to make positive rather than negative impacts?

Can one stop and smell the roses!?! Can one come to see the earth as a living being and oneself as a steward through a regular, rhythmical and developmentally appropriate Garden Curriculum?

It is the hope of the future.



**Two Books On
Teaching Gardening:**

*R. Steiner's Contribution To
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By Hilmar Moore
156pp, Paperback, \$12.95

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