# Books to Inspire the Next Generation of Gardeners

by Beverly Kent

The Growing Good Kids – Excellence in Children's Literature Awards, launched in 2005 by the Junior Master Gardener program and the American Horticultural Society, recognize picture books that encourage children to develop an interest in plants, gardens, and the environment.

Publishers nominate titles published the previous year, and a committee of educators and youth-gardening leaders selects winners for their engaging stories, environmental messages, and artistic illustrations.

The 2026 winners are:
**Beansprout** by Sarah Lynne Reul. A classroom seed that won't sprout becomes a lesson in disappointment, second chances, and community gardening.

**Miss Betti, What Is This?** by Lela Nargi, illustrated by Kristen Uroda. A Detroit lunch lady improves school meals and starts urban gardens so students can grow their own food.

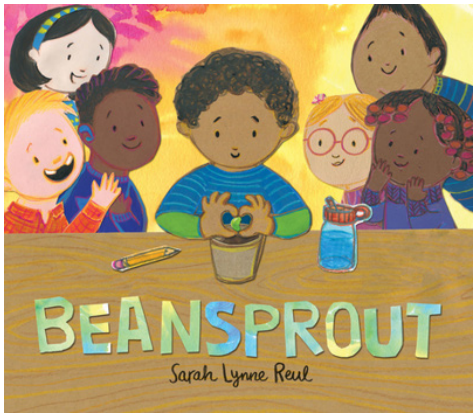
**The Best Garden in the World** by Alice Courtley. A city squirrel learns that the garden must also welcome its forest neighbors.

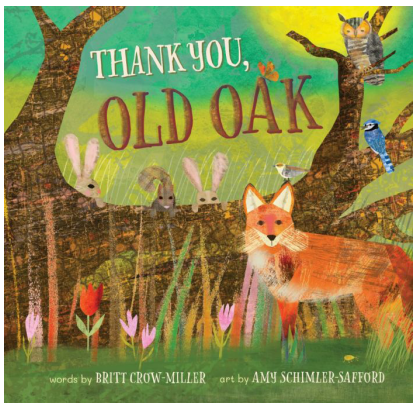
**The Great Pollinator Count** by Susan Edwards Richmond. Children count bees and butterflies in their school garden, winning over a skeptical new classmate.

**Thank You, Old Oak** by Brit Crow-Miller, illustrated by Amy Schimler and Britt Crow-Miller. Forest animals thank a fallen 400-year-old oak and discover its new purpose in life.

Since the awards began, more than 100 books have received recognition for promoting children's interest in gardening, plants, and the natural world. A list of past winners is available at https://jmgkids.us/bookawards/.

During the cold winter months, these offer everyone an array of garden topics to enjoy.




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