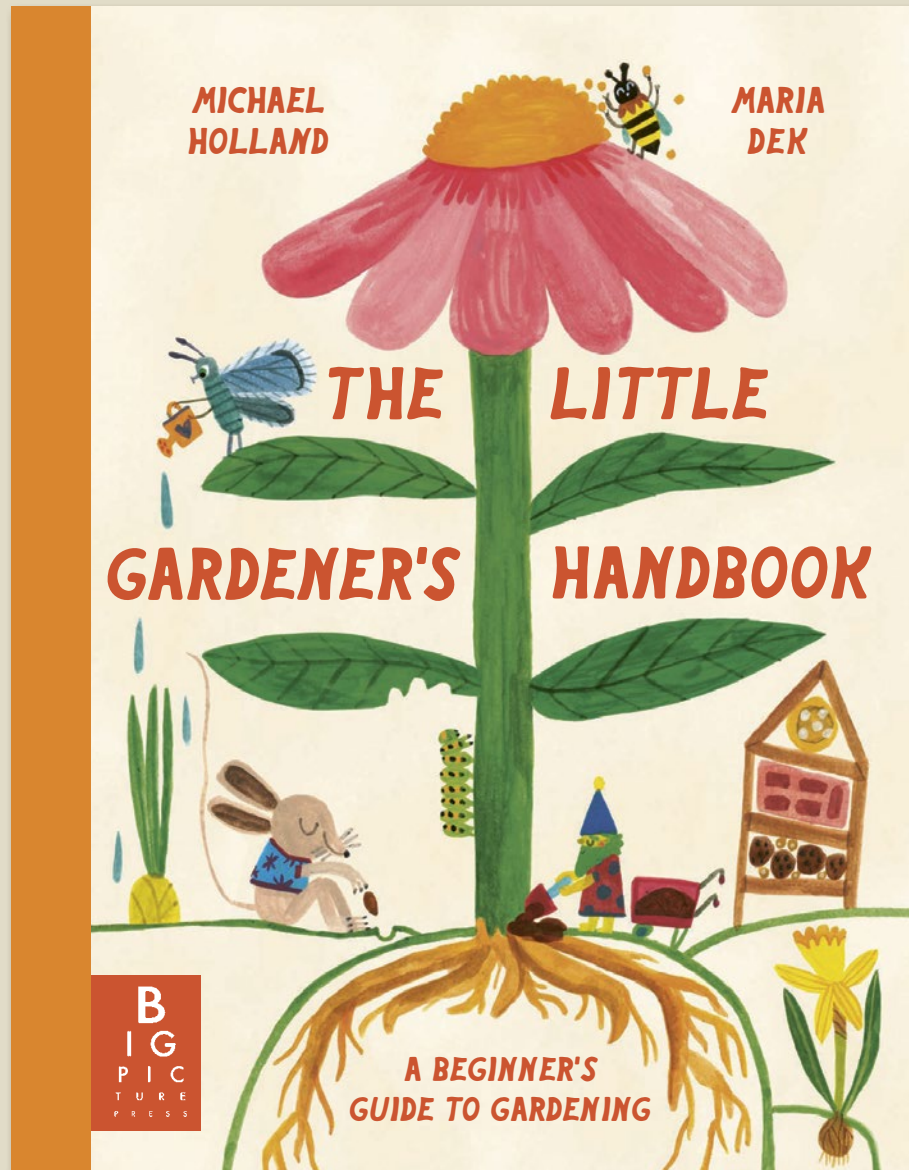


The Little Gardener's Handbook



A vibrant introduction to gardening.

- A vibrant first introduction to gardening for ages 6+
- Includes DIY activities to try at home.
- Text by expert ecologist and educator, Michael Holland.
- Colourful, charming artwork by illustrator Maria Dek.
- Expanding the younger side of the Big Picture Press list.
- Gardening is a subject only growing in popularity.
- Arlin quarter binding and matt lam cover finishes.

The Little Gardener's Handbook

ALL ABOUT SOIL

Soil is the brown earth that plants grow in and it plays a very important role in supporting life on our planet. The best way to keep your plants happy is to take care of their soil!

Check a seed has sprouted, the soil helps to anchor the plant's roots in the ground. From here, the roots can absorb water, nutrients and minerals from the soil that help the plant to grow.

Soil is teeming with life. Did you know that there are more living things in a handful of soil than there are humans on earth? Look at all of the living organisms such as worms, fungi, insects and bacteria.

These organisms have special functions. Worms, for example, are little underground diggers. They move dirt through the soil's surface. This is called turning over. As they dig, they bring up what they have eaten, which is a valuable kind of food for the soil.

GET TO KNOW YOUR SOIL

Soil is very important to plants, but there are different types of soil. Each one has its own special characteristics. You can tell what type of soil you have by looking at its color, texture and how it feels. Here are some tips to help you identify your soil.

1. **Color and texture:** Different types of soil have different colors and textures. For example, sandy soil is light-colored and feels gritty, while clay soil is dark and feels sticky.
2. **Water retention:** Some soils hold water for a long time, while others drain it away quickly. You can test this by watering a pot of soil and seeing how long it takes for the water to disappear.
3. **Plant growth:** Different plants grow better in different types of soil. For example, some plants like sandy soil, while others prefer clay soil.

GARDEN FOES

Sometimes your garden might be visited by some not-so-welcome wildlife visitors – we call them garden foes. Rather than using harmful chemical pesticides, there are some natural ways you can discourage any unwanted visitors to your garden.

ENCOURAGE BENEFICIAL ANIMALS

You can encourage beneficial animals by providing them with a safe haven. This can be done by creating a small habitat in your garden, such as a bug hotel or a bird house.

PEST REPELLENTS

To keep insects away from your plants, you can use natural repellents. These include things like garlic, chili, and vinegar. You can make your own repellent by mixing these ingredients with water.

PROTECT PLANTS

Some plants are more resistant to pests than others. You can choose plants that are known to be pest-resistant, or you can use physical barriers like netting to protect your plants.

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR PESTS

Regularly check your plants for signs of pest damage. If you find any pests, act quickly to remove them. You can do this by hand-picking them or using natural remedies.

PLANTS THAT HELP OTHER PLANTS

Some plants can help other plants in your garden. For example, marigolds are known to repel pests, while companion plants like basil can help tomatoes grow better.

GROW CUPS OF NASTURTIUMS

Did you know that you can eat the petals from certain flowers? Nasturtiums are bright and colorful, and they have a little peppery taste. You can add them to a salad for a burst of extra flavour.

YOU WILL NEED:

- Old cups or tins
- Straw
- Nasturtium seeds
- Water

1. In the bottom of each cup, add a layer of gravel. This is to allow the water to drain away from the roots because the cups do not have any drainage holes.
2. Fill each cup with compost.
3. Place a couple of holes in the compost and drop in the seeds.
4. Cover with a little extra compost and add water to the cups and to the water tank above each cup.
5. After a week or two, the seeds will start to grow. When they are about 5cm tall, they can be eaten. They are best eaten raw.
6. In a few more weeks, the plants will be flowering. You can harvest them whenever you like. If you do on the plants, just pull them off and a new one will grow in its place.

WELCOME TO THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF GARDENING!

Whether you have a big garden or a small windowsill, you can make the world a greener place. Gardening is one of the best hobbies in the world and it's good for you, your neighbourhood and our planet! People have been gardening in one way or another for thousands of years, so you will be continuing a very long and important tradition.

In this book, you'll learn about how plants work, how to grow your own vegetables, how to encourage wildlife to your garden and why protecting plants is important for our lovely planet. Along the way, there will be plenty of activities and experiments for you to try for yourself – mostly using everyday materials you can find at home.

What are you waiting for? Let's begin!

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