

Ben's Year in the Vegetable Garden

A garden story for children, to read aloud together





Winter: seeds in a jar.

Outside, snow fell on the garden.
Inside, Ben sat at the kitchen
table with a jar.

In the jar were tiny seeds. Ben
gave them a little water every
morning.

“Nothing is happening,” said Ben.

“Wait,” said Mama. “Seeds take
their time.”

On the fourth day, the seeds
cracked open. Little white roots
came out. Little green leaves came
out.

“They’re growing!” said Ben. And
they were.

Late winter: seedlings under a light.

The snow was still on the ground, but Ben was already gardening.

He planted tomato seeds in a tray of dirt. He put the tray under a bright light. He gave the seeds a little water every morning.

“Nothing is happening,” said Ben.

“Wait,” said Mama. “Seeds take their time.”

One morning, there was a row of tiny green plants standing up in the tray.

“They’re growing!” said Ben. And they were.



Spring: the tomato goes into the garden.

The snow was gone. The trees had flowers. The dirt was warm.

Ben dug a hole with his trowel. He put a tomato plant in the hole. He patted the dirt down all around it.

“There,” said Ben. “Now grow.”

He gave it a drink from the watering can.



Ben writes it down.

Ben had a garden notebook.

He wrote: Tomato. Planted today.

He drew a picture of the tomato plant. It was very small.

“Why do you write it down?” asked Mama.

“So I remember,” said Ben.





Summer: the first radishes.

Summer came. The sun was hot. The garden was green and busy.

Ben pulled a radish out of the ground. It was round and red and cold.

He pulled another one. And another one.

“For you,” said Ben, and he gave them to Mama.

They washed the radishes and ate them right there. They were crunchy. They were a little bit spicy.

The tomato Ben planted.

One day Ben ran to the gate.

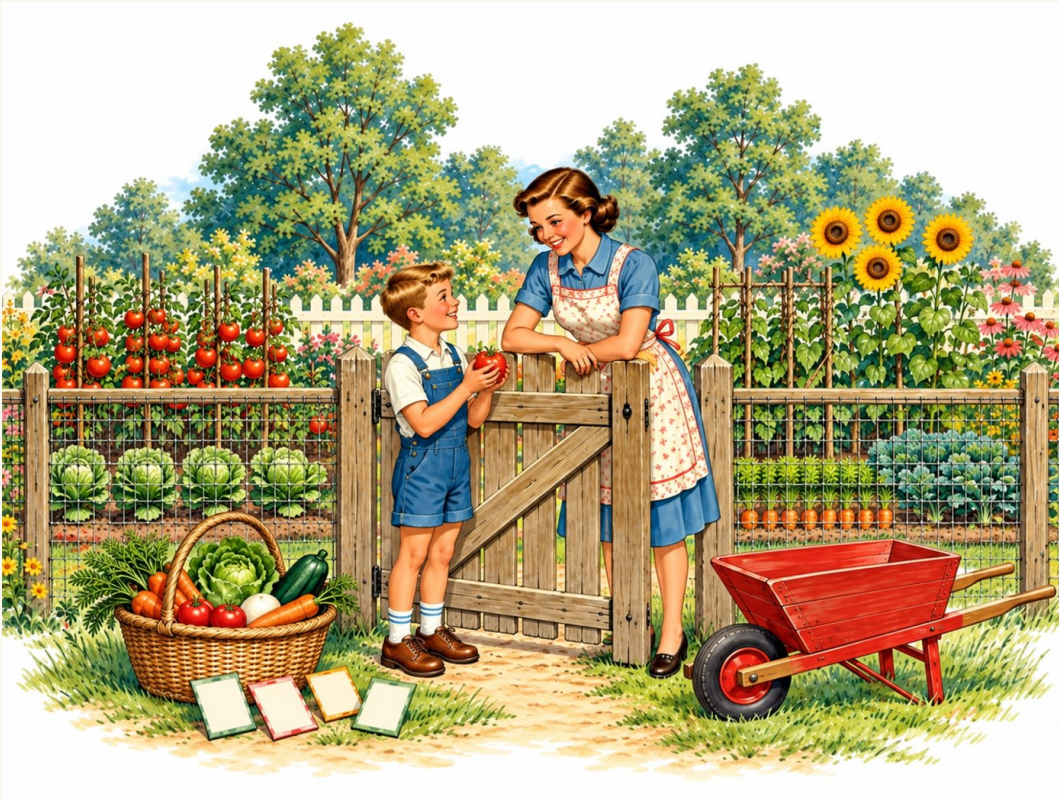
“Mama! Mama! Look!”

In his hands was a tomato. A big one. A red one. Warm from the sun.

It was the tomato plant Ben put in the ground in spring. It had been growing all along.

“Seeds take their time,” said Ben.

“They do,” said Mama.



Fall: the big harvest.

The leaves turned yellow and orange. The pumpkins turned orange too.

Ben filled a basket. Tomatoes. Beans. Carrots. A pumpkin as big as his head.

It was heavy. He carried it anyway.





Putting the garden to bed.

The garden was empty now. Ben raked the leaves. He spread straw over the dirt, like a blanket.

“Good night, garden,” said Ben.
“See you in the spring.”

And then Ben went inside, and got out his jar, and got out his seeds.

Because seeds take their time.

The End

Try It at Home: Seeds in a Jar

Ben's jar of sprouts is the easiest garden there is.

1. Put a spoonful of seeds in a clean jar. Alfalfa, radish, or dried lentils from the kitchen all work.
2. Cover them with water and leave them overnight.
3. In the morning, pour the water off. Rinse the seeds with fresh water and pour that off too.
4. Rinse and drain every morning. Keep the jar out of direct sun.
5. In three or four days you will have sprouts. Rinse them well and eat them on a sandwich or in a salad.

Things to talk about while you wait:

- What do seeds need to grow? (Water, warmth, and time.)
- Which part came out first, the root or the leaf?
- What would you plant in your garden?

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