

## FEATURE

## And on the seventh day, kids marveled at garden



Parenting  
MONTHLY FEATURE BY

For six straight mornings, my children headed downstairs to the living room, flopped down on their stomachs and inspected their dirt-filled paper cups and plastic containers to see if their seeds had begun to sprout.

A few days earlier, my young daughter, Teresa, and her brother, Bobby, had carefully selected their very own garden variety of seeds — basil, tomatoes, zinnias and snapdragons for Teresa; beans, zucchini, periwinkles and peppers for Bobby. As we opened the envelopes of seeds, the kids marveled at the different sizes, shapes and numbers of seeds, which they cupped in their hands. They wondered how these brown, black and tan morsels could possibly grow into the glorious flowers and colorful vegetables that appeared on the seed packets.

And then on the seventh day, the reliable bean seeds sprouted and the hoops and hollers from the kids echoed throughout the house. Caught up in the excitement, Bobby said, "I love to pick out the seeds. I love to plant seeds and watch them grow. I love to pick the vegetables, but there's no way I'm ever going to eat them!"

My vegetable-loathing son didn't realize that my goal in having a garden wasn't a scheme designed to lure him into eating vegetables. I simply wanted him to be able to identify the vegetables by name at the dinner table as he politely refused them and passed them on, rather than pointing in horror and exclaiming, "What's that? It looks disgusting!"

Because he has planted oregano and



BY EILEEN MARX

## family matters

basil for two springs, he now knows that they are spices on his pizza, and he no longer exclaims, "Why is there grass on my pizza?"

Teresa has her own flower garden that she loves to weed and water. She has also kept a close watch on the vegetable garden. It's delightful to see how indignant she becomes after the neighborhood rabbits have nibbled on the garden plants. These days Teresa can relate more closely with Farmer McGregor than with Peter Rabbit as she announces, "Those bad bunnies better stay out of my garden!"

My husband Joe and I planted our first vegetable and flower gardens 12 years ago. We soon discovered what many veteran and amateur gardeners have found: Spending time in a garden brings greater peace, patience and produce into your life. It's also a wonderful way to spend time with your kids and teach them about nature and their role in helping plants to grow.

In a *Los Angeles Times* article, "Linking Soil and Soul," writer Janet Kinoshian quotes the experts on the many positive effects of gardening, among them: One hour in the garden will reduce your blood pressure the same as if you had meditat-

ed for an hour.

Numerous hospitals and correctional agencies report dramatic decreases in violent and antisocial behavior when gardening is part of their program.

Gardening is the one art that stimulates all of the senses.

Physiologists report heightened muscle relaxation, slower breathing and increased endorphin production among gardeners.

Psychologists say self-esteem, patience levels and generosity are boosted when people garden.

We live in a world where our wonder is often directed at the technological rather than the natural world. We extol the marvel of the microchip rather than celebrate the miracle of a mustard seed. Today countless farms throughout our country have been sold. In some communities farms are so rare that they are visited as tourist attractions.

Landscape services with a team of "lawn doctors" will cut, trim, prune and plant in the wink of an eye, leaving behind miniature lawn flags warning that chemicals have been sprayed. While it's true that we lead busy lives and yard work isn't for everyone, we should find some way to stay connected to our land, flowers and plants. More important, we need to find ways to teach our children to care for nature and to respect the earth that feeds and cares for all of us.

It's interesting to remember that God was the earth's first gardener as he plant-

ed the garden of Eden. The Old and New Testaments are rich with images, descriptions and parables about seeds, sowers, gardens and harvests. Two turning points in humankind also took place in gardens: Sin and death come to mankind through Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and salvation and eternal life are restored during Jesus' final days on earth, beginning in the Garden of Gethsemani. And of all the symbols Jesus could have used to explain the word of God, he chose a mustard seed.

As I watch my children taking such delight in their paper-cup gardens, it's a reminder that children often lead us back to what really matters in life. Children understand what it means to be dependent on a gardener's loving care. They know what it feels like to rely on a gardener to give them water to drink and to provide the right amount of sunlight. Like the delicate flowers, they know their gardeners are busy and have much to do. But they need our time, our patience and our tender care.

They need us to watch and celebrate each phase of their growth. On occasion, they need us to weed out the bad influences that crop up around them. Like most garden plants, they can't be hurried. But if we give them lots of love to grow, perhaps they will have a chance to blossom into something beautiful.

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Marx and her family live in Lawrenceville, N.J.

## Postcard scenes make up for some video shortfalls



NEW YORK (CNS) — The following are home videocassette reviews from the U.S. Catholic Conference Office

for Film and Broadcasting. Each videocassette is available on VHS format. Theatrical movies on video have a USCC classification and Motion Picture Association of America rating. All reviews indicate the appropriate age group for the video audience.

## Zeus and Roxanne

A dog and a dolphin form an unlikely friendship while the dog's widowed owner (Steve Guttenberg) and a single mom (Kathleen Quinlan) who happens to be a scientist studying the dolphin are nudged towards love and marriage by their enterprising children. Director George Miller accentuates the postcard-pretty Caribbean setting, but the romance is highly contrived and the cuteness of the animals relentlessly stressed. Brief intense menace. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

## Beverly Hills Ninja

Dopey comedy in which a klutzy American (Chris Farley) raised in a Japanese martial-arts school trails a mysterious blonde (Nicollette Sheridan) to Los Angeles intent on rescuing her from a gangster boyfriend. Directed by Dennis Dugan, the Farley vehicle is more silly than funny as his awkward physical comedy fails to compensate for the witless script. Much comic violence and some sexual innuendo. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

## Fantastic Voyage

The miniaturization of a medical team (Stephen Boyd, Raquel Welch and Arthur

O'Connell) to the size of a molecule and their injection into a stroke patient's bloodstream is the only possible way to save the life of an important scientist. Director Richard Fleischer's incredible plot premise yields rich dividends in the form of exacting special effects re-creating the surreal world within the human body. Much suspense and some tense moments. The USCC classification is A-I — general patronage. Not rated by the MPAA.

## Rudyard Kipling's The Second Jungle Book: Mowgli and Baloo

The live-action adventures of Mowgli (Jamie Williams), Kipling's wild boy of 1890s India, involve an American (Bill Campbell) who wants to bring him back as a P.T. Barnum circus attraction, his evil uncle (Gulshan Grover) who wants to kill him, a dotty old soldier (Roddy McDowall) and a variety of jungle animals. Directed by Duncan McLachlan, the jungle action fantasy does well with the wonders of nature but the plot meanders fitfully along until the story's big but bumpy finish. Many scenes of menace, some quite frightening, and occasional slapstick violence. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

## Summer School

A gym teacher (Mark Harmon) becomes a reluctant remedial English instructor whose nonconformist tactics finally produce positive results with a group of impudent teen-agers forced to spend their summer in school. The deals struck between teacher and student in writer-director Carl Reiner's light comedy address social and sexual issues requiring a mature perspective. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

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