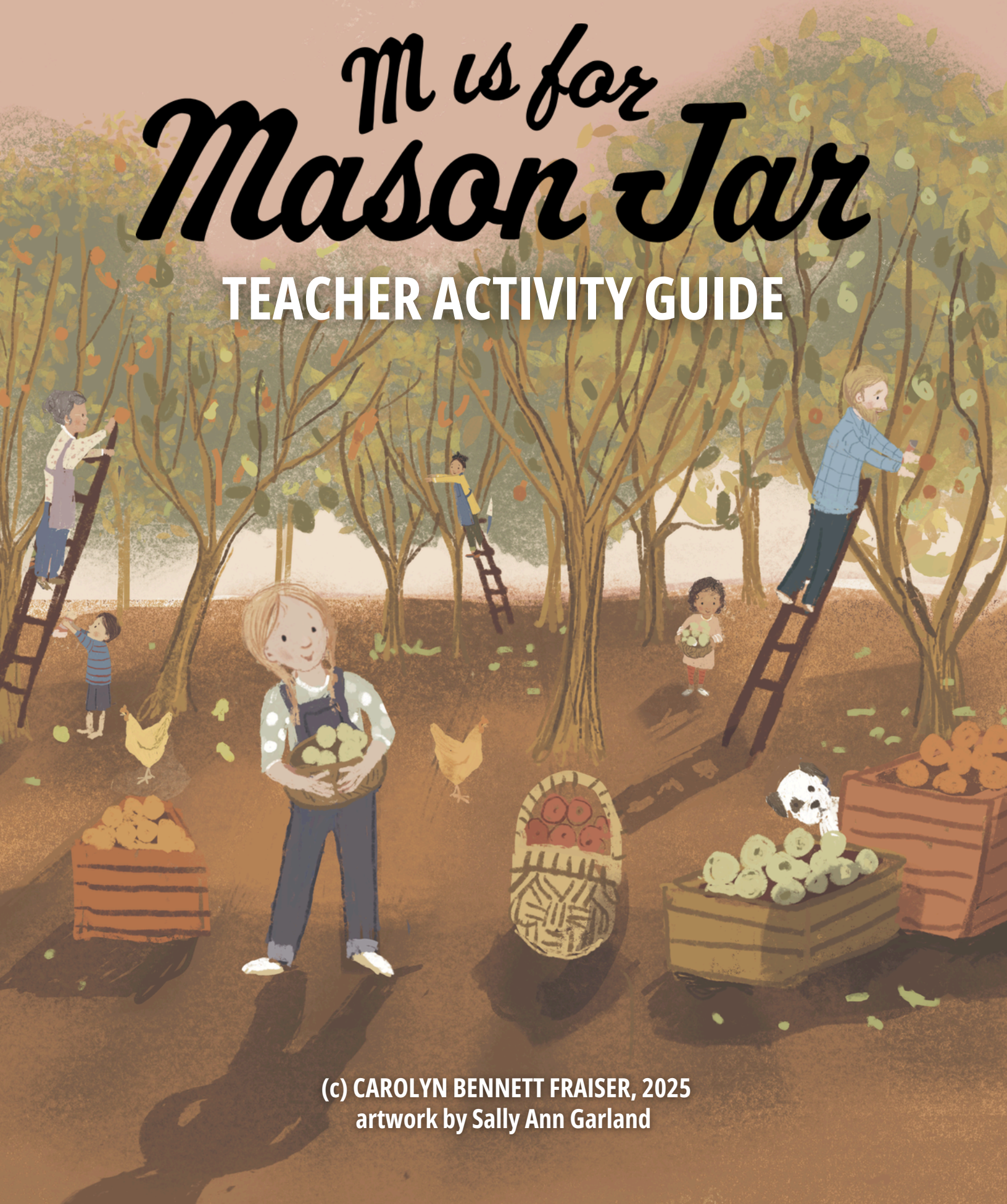


# *M is for Mason Jar*

## TEACHER ACTIVITY GUIDE



(c) CAROLYN BENNETT FRAISER, 2025  
artwork by Sally Ann Garland





## About the Author



**Carolyn Bennett Fraiser** grew up on a small ranch in Florida where she learned the value of growing her own food and swapping with neighbors. Today, she is a homesteader in the mountains of western North Carolina and an author of several nonfiction books for curious children.

## About the Illustrator



**Sally Anne Garland** was brought up in a small town in the Highlands of Scotland, called Alness and studied Illustration at Edinburgh College Of Art, before moving to Glasgow where she now lives and works with her partner and young son.

## About the Publisher

**Familius Books** is a global trade publishing company that publishes books and other content to help families be happy. We believe that happy families are the foundation of a happy life. We recognize that every family looks different, and we passionately believe in helping all families find greater joy.





## Educational Tools

### **Alphabet and Sound Recognition**

Learn the ABCs by going through the alphabet, one letter at a time. Listen to the sounds that letter makes through multiple words that are used on each page.

### **Alliteration in Poetry**

When sounds are repeated as the first letter of multiple words in a sentence, phrase, or stanza of poetry, this is called alliteration. Think about additional words that start with the same letter.

### **Agricultural Tools**

*(Homesteading, Farming, and Self-Sustainability)*

Learn about life skills through homesteading activities found on every page and get involved through activities listed at the back of the book in both classrooms and family.

### **Family Traditions**

Family is the core of our society. Learn about different families and their traditions. Talk about how to respect families from different backgrounds.





## Mason Jar History

Mason jars were actually not around during the times of colonial and pioneer homesteading. They were invented much later—in 1858 by John Landis Mason, a tinsmith in Vineland, New Jersey.

A new method of canning was beginning to become popular. First attempts used jars with corks that were sealed with wax. It wasn't easy or safe. Mason wanted to find a better way. At just 26 years old, he invented the new jar with a flat lid that sealed with a rubber band. A metal ring held the lid tight.

The new canning method immediately became popular. Although Mason had patented the metal ring, he failed to patent the rubber band on the lid until 10 years later. By then, the jars were being made in too many places to control. Mason couldn't make enough money off of his invention. He eventually let the patent on the metal ring expire. He later died, almost penniless.

In 1880, the Ball brothers bought a canning company in Buffalo, New York, that made mason jars. They changed its name to the Ball Brothers Manufacturing Company. When victory gardens became popular during World War II, home canning soared in popularity and the Ball label stuck.

Most mason jars we have today have the name Ball impressed into the glass.

SOURCE: "A Brief History of the Mason Jar," *Smithsonian Magazine* (August 26, 2020).

Explore the history of the Ball family and mason jars at the Minnetrista Museum in Muncie, Indiana



## Explore Homesteading

As a family or class, explore a few activities from the back of the book and talk about how those activities help us become more self-sufficient and take care of our earth. Older children can tackle more complicated tasks.

**Discussion Question:** Why is it important to learn these skills?

- Find an apron that fits just right.
- Measure the ingredients for batter.
- Gather the spices and supplies for canning.
- Roll and cut the dough for biscuits or donuts.
- Collect eggs from the henhouse.
- Help your family prep the soil for the planting.
- Pick vegetables from the garden.
- Make gifts for friends and neighbors.
- Remember to use insect repellent before going outside.
- Enter your favorite items in county fair competitions.
- Help the grownups cook dinner.
- Volunteer to feed the animals.
- Collect, wash, and sort mason jars.
- Measure fabric for sewing projects.
- Pick fruit from trees.
- Carry a basket of supplies to the garden.
- Help fold quilts and blankets after taking a nap.
- Prepare potatoes, radishes, and garlic for storage.
- Learn how and why to seed-save for next year.
- Take a ride on the tractor with a grownup.
- Clean up under the beds.
- Greet people who visit your homestead.
- Pump and fill water buckets and troughs on the farm.
- Make sure pens for all the animals are always latched.
- Help carry the wood for the fireplace or wood stove.
- Spend a night outdoors under the stars.

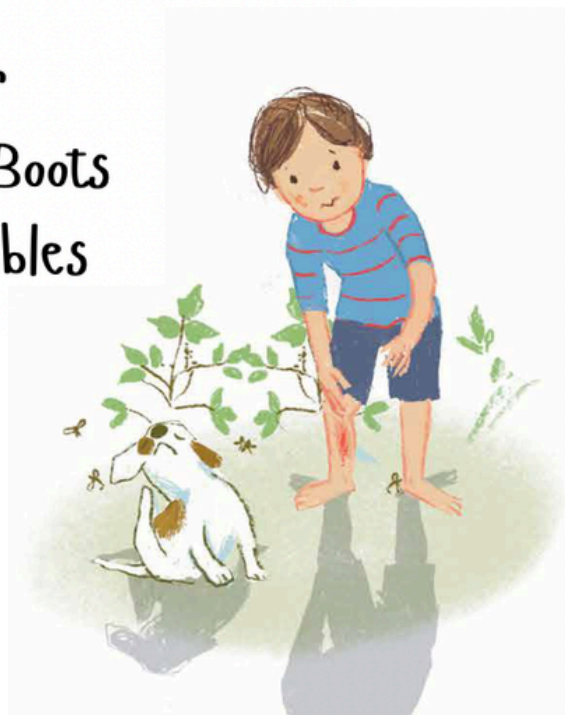




## Go on a Scavenger Hunt

As a family or class, visit a working homestead and see how many different items from the book you can find. Feel free to use the list below or come up with a list of your own.

- |                                     |                                      |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apron      | <input type="checkbox"/> Napkins     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bread      | <input type="checkbox"/> Oranges     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cookbook   | <input type="checkbox"/> Pears       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donut      | <input type="checkbox"/> Quilt       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eggs       | <input type="checkbox"/> Recipe      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farm       | <input type="checkbox"/> Seeds       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GreenBeans | <input type="checkbox"/> Tractor     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honey      | <input type="checkbox"/> UntiedBoots |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insect     | <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetables  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jelly      | <input type="checkbox"/> Water       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kettle     | <input type="checkbox"/> Zipper      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MasonJar   |                                      |





## Create a Hydroponic Garden

Grow vegetables, herbs, or flowers together and learn about creating a hydroponic system. A **hydroponic garden** is a method of growing plants that uses water infused with nutrients instead of soil. Hydroponic gardens actually use less water than traditional soil-based gardens.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Several large 32-oz wide mouth mason jars
- Clay pebbles
- A 3-inch net pot for each mason jar
- Seed pods or rockwool / stonewool cubes
- Plant seeds or starter plants
- LED light on a short stand
- Plant food for hydroponic systems



### INSTRUCTIONS:

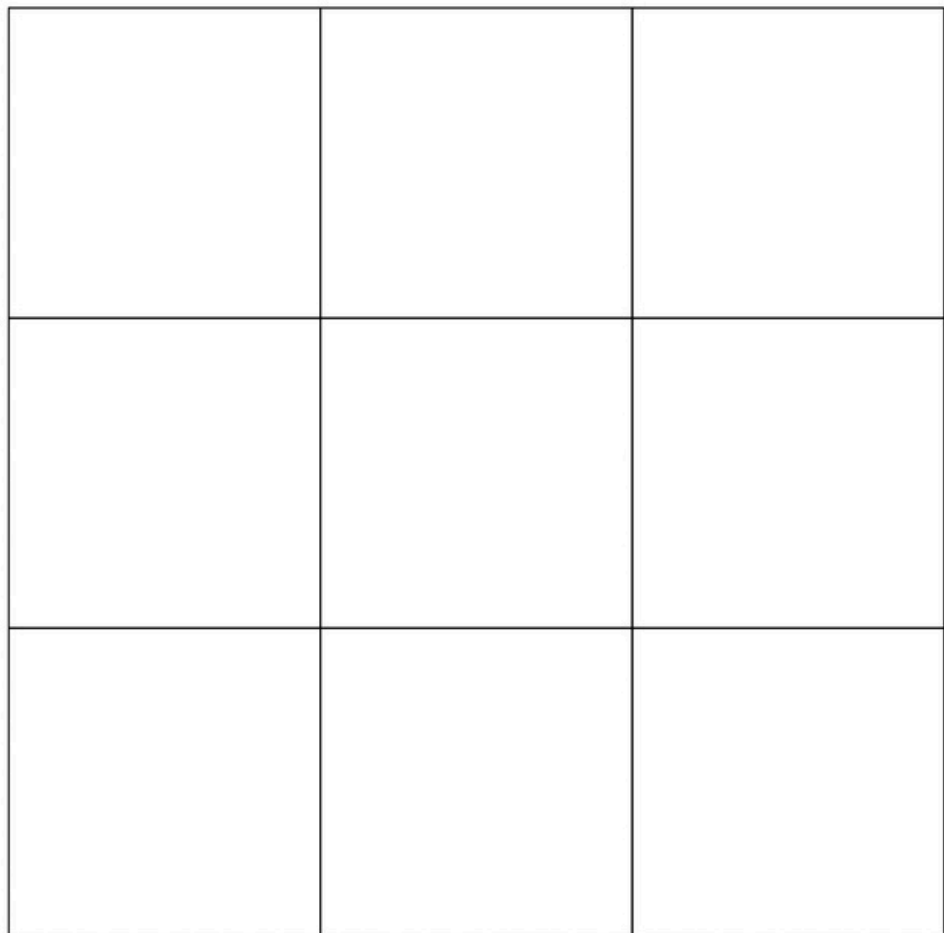
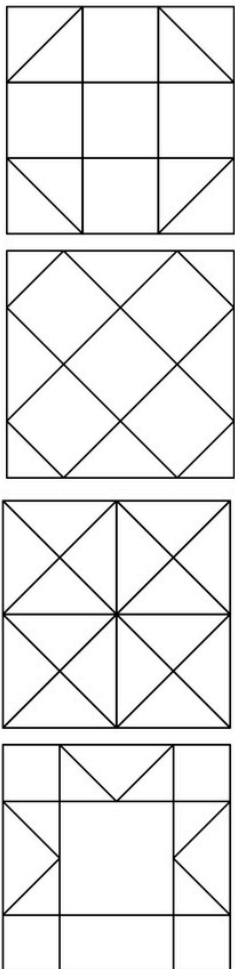
- Fill mason jars up with enough water to reach the bottom of the net pot when it is placed just on the rim.
- Fill bottom of net pot with clay pebbles and place seeds pods or rockwool cubes securely in the middle of the pebbles.
- Add water to bring level up to the bottom of the seed pod or cube.
- Secure with the mason jar ring and put under LED lights until the seeds spout.
- Add plant food to the water according to the instructions provided on the package.
- Replace the water in the jar each week with more plant food.
- Watch your plants grow.





## Create Your Own Quilt Pattern

Introduce children to geometric shapes and quilting. Print this simple 9-square quilt pattern below and cut out squares out of construction paper or fabric of different colors and patterns. Have children glue them into the squares using different arrangements to create basic “quilt” patterns. Experiment with some of the designs on the left.





## Write Your Own ABC Book

You can write about any topic that you are interested in. This activity can be done individually, in small groups, or as a classroom project.

**Pick a Topic.** Choose a subject you are interested in (or want to learn more about). For group projects, choose a topic that everyone in the group has access to: items in the classroom, what you find on a playground, places to go in your town or city, or types of activities to do on summer break.

**Create a Word List.** See how many words you can think about your topic. Organize them by their first letter. Don't stop at one word per letter. See how many words you can think of for each letter. The best word may not be the first word you think about!

**Begin writing.** Write at least one sentence for each letter of the alphabet about your topic. You can use the "A is for..." structure, but you don't have to. Get creative for harder letters like "Q" or "X."

**Share Your Story.** For larger groups or classrooms, a fun activity would be to discuss how no two stories are alike and how each reflects the author's unique perspective and/or imagination.

Most importantly, **have fun!**







## Agricultural Picture Books:



### **BEHOLD OUR MAGICAL GARDEN:** **Poems Fresh from a School Garden**

by Allan Wolf and Daniel Duncan  
Candlewick (2022)  
Themes: Poetry, School Gardens



### **COMPOST STEW**

by Mary McKenna Siddals and Ashley Wolff  
Dragonfly Books (2014)  
Themes: ABC Book, Composting, Homesteading



### **HOW TO HATCH A READER** **HOW TO HATCH A WRITER**

by Kari Ann Gonzalez and Rachel Suzanne  
Feeding Minds Press (2023, 2025)  
Themes: Learning to Read, Chickens



### **IN OUR GARDEN**

by Pat Zietlow Miller and Melissa Crowton  
G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers (2022)  
Themes: School Garden





## Agricultural Picture Books:



### **IT'S CORN PICKING TIME!**

by Jill Esbaum and Melissa Crowton

Neal Porter Books (2025)

Themes: Farming, Machinery



### **MISS MACDONALD HAS A FARM**

by Kaylee Gwarjanski and Elizabet Vukovic

Penguin Random House (2024)

Themes: Farming



### **OUTDOOR FARM, INDOOR FARM**

by Lindsay H. Metcalf and Xin Li

Astra Young Readers (2024)

Themes: Friendship, Hydroponic Gardening



### **OVER IN THE GARDEN**

by Jana Mathies and Tisha Lee

Penguin Random House (2025)

Themes: Gardening







## Agricultural Picture Books:

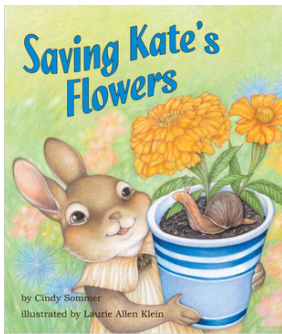


### **POTATOES FOR PIRATE PEARL**

by Jennifer Concepcion and Chloe Burgett

Feeding Minds Press (2023)

Themes: Potato Farm, Pirates

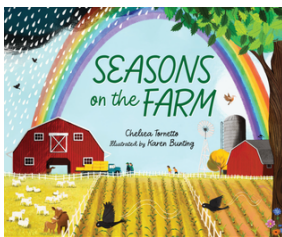


### **SAVING KATE'S FLOWERS**

by Cindy Sommer and Laurie Allen Klein

Arborale Publishing (2016)

Themes: Seasons, Problem-Solving, Gardening

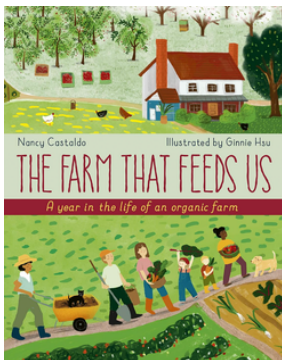


### **SEASONS ON THE FARM**

by Chelsea Tornetto and Karen Bunting

Sleeping Bear Press (2025)

Themes: Seasons, Farming Jobs



### **THE FARM THAT FEEDS US**

by Nancy Castaldo and Ginnie Hsu

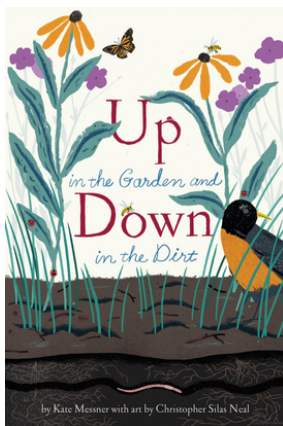
Words & Pictures (2020)

Themes: Farming





## Agricultural Picture Books:



### **UP IN THE GARDEN AND DOWN IN THE DIRT**

by Kate Messner and Christopher Silas Neal

Chronicle Books (2017)

Themes: Gardening, Soil

## Fun with Mason Jars:



### **MASON JAR SCIENCE:**

### **40 Slimy, Squishy, Super Cool Experiments**

by Jonathan Adolph

Storey Publishing (2018)

Themes: Science, STEM







## More Fun with Mason Jars:



Available for Download at:  
**[CarolynBFraiser.com/MasonJar](http://CarolynBFraiser.com/MasonJar)**