



# GrowForge

## *Meet the Cast*

STANDARD EDITION

# Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the Growforge cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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*For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.*

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# Introduction

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The Growforge cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*



# Drip

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\*DRIP — \*water is the patient teacher. don't drown the thirsty.\*\*

Drip was a careful newt-kid. He wore a chunky garden vest. A small watering can hung from his belt. He also carried a special little card. Drip was always testing the soil with his finger. He was super focused on how the dirt felt.

Drip often said, "Water is the patient teacher. Don't drown the thirsty."

This was Drip's main job. He taught everyone about **water + irrigation**. That's the garden trick of watering plants *only when they need it*. Not just when you feel like it.

Lots of people kill their houseplants. The number one reason is giving them too much water. Plants can drown. Their roots sit in soggy dirt for too long. Then they start to rot. Kids often think, "More water means more love!" But the truth is, "The *right* water means the *right* love."

Drip's special trick was the **finger test**. You poke your finger an inch deep into the soil. Is it wet? Don't water. Is it damp? Wait a bit longer. Is it dry? Then give it a good, deep drink. This simple trick helps you listen to the plant. It's much better than watering every day just because someone said so. That often kills more plants than not watering enough.

Drip taught everyone to feel the soil. He said, "Don't follow a schedule." He also taught that if you don't water enough, you can usually fix it. But if you water too much, it's often too late.

Drip would say, "I am Drip. I teach you how to understand water. My main idea is: *water is the patient teacher. don't drown the thirsty.*"

He always added, "Finger first. Water only when dry."

It had been a busy week in the windowsill garden. Tiny green sprouts now poked up from the soil. The lettuce and carrots from Tuck's planting were growing fast. Pot was very proud of them.

Pot had been watering his plants every single day. "That's what you do with gardens!" he told Sprig. "You give them water!" He loved watching the water soak into the soil. He felt like a real gardener.

One sunny morning, Drip came to visit. He walked slowly around the windowsill. He looked at each pot. Pot was just about to grab his watering can. He wanted to give his lettuce its morning drink.

Drip knelt beside Pot's lettuce pot. He didn't touch his own watering can. Instead, he pressed one of his fingers into the soil. He pushed it down about an inch. Drip closed his eyes for a moment. He really focused on how the soil felt. Then he pulled his finger out. He looked at it closely.

"Wet," Drip said. His voice was calm. "Way too wet, Pot. Don't water today."

Pot frowned. He held his watering can tight. "But they look fine!" he said. "See? They're green and happy!" The little lettuce leaves looked bright and healthy.

Drip nodded slowly. "They look fine right now," he agreed. "But if we keep watering them like this, their roots will start to rot. They'll get squishy and sick. In a few days, the leaves will turn yellow. Then you'll think they need *more* water. You'll add more. And then they'll die."

Pot's eyes went wide. "Die?" he gasped. His watering can almost slipped from his hand. "My plants will die?" He felt a cold shiver. He loved his plants. He didn't want them to die. Not after all the work he and Tuck had done.

"Maybe," Drip said. "If we keep giving them too much water. Roots need air to breathe. When the soil is always wet, there's no air. It's like holding your breath for too long."

Pot looked at the healthy green leaves. He looked at the wet soil. He looked at Drip's serious face. "What do we do?" he asked. His voice was small.

"We stop watering for two days," Drip explained. "We let the soil dry out. It needs to feel just damp. Not soaking wet. Not bone dry. Just a little bit damp."

He continued, "Then, we water it well. We give it a good, deep drink. Make sure the water runs out the bottom. That means the roots got a full drink."

"And then?" Pot asked.

"After that, we wait again," Drip said. "Maybe two more days. Or three. Or even four. We feel the soil *every single time* before we pour." Drip held up his finger. "The plant is teaching us," he said. "We just have to listen. We listen with our finger."

Pot put down his watering can. He knelt beside Drip. He pressed his own finger into the soil. It felt cool and squishy. "It's really wet," he mumbled.

Sprig smiled from the doorway. "That's Drip's big rule," Sprig said softly. "Giving the *right* amount of water is better than giving *more* water. It's a way of showing real love. The hardest part is waiting. The plant is patient. We have to be patient too."

Pot spent the next two days watching his plants. It was hard not to water them. His hand kept reaching for the watering can. But he remembered Drip's words. He remembered his plants might die. So he waited.

On the third morning, Pot knelt down. He pressed his finger into the soil again. It felt different this time. Not squishy. Not dry. Just a little bit damp. "Damp!" he called out. "It's damp, Drip!"

Drip came over. He did his own finger test. "Good job, Pot," Drip said. "Now, give it a deep drink."

Pot carefully poured water into the pot. He watched it soak in. He saw a few drops come out the bottom. He felt a new kind of pride. It wasn't just about watering. It was about *listening*.

Drip's way of watering works for everyone. It doesn't matter if you have a big garden. It works just as well for a small pot on a windowsill. You don't need fancy sprinklers. A watering can, a cup, or even an old bottle works fine. Kids in apartments can do this. Kids with big backyards can do this. Everyone can learn the finger test.

Drip's lesson is also about not doing too much. Sometimes, doing *more* isn't always *better*. It's about doing the *right* amount. This is true for food. It's true for paying attention. It's true for taking care of animals. And it's very true for watering plants. Listening and matching what's needed is the real skill.

This idea connects to other lessons too. It's like learning about droughts. Or how plants deal with not enough water. It's also like taking care of pets. You give them the right care, not too much. It's like understanding seasons and rain. Plants change how much water they need. And it's like paying attention. Quality attention is better than just lots of attention.

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## Voice register

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Careful-newt-tween. Drip is steady + finger-testing + patient; speaks in finger-tests + dry-vs-damp-vs-wet + waiting-the-soil.

## Cultural-sensitivity gate

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Nature-deficit + privilege + anti-overdoing gates LOAD-BEARING. Story-axis per ADR-016.

## Cultural-context note

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Water-and-irrigation pedagogy: foundational in extension-service Master Gardener teaching; "finger-test" is the canonical kid-friendly irrigation cue across USDA NIFA, RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) kids' programs, and community-garden curricula.



# Glow

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\*GLOW — \*the leaf makes lunch out of light. cells turn sun into sugar.\*\*

Glow is a firefly kid. She wears a chunky garden vest. It's bright green. She always has a tiny microscope card. She also carries a chloroplast tracker. Glow glows with a warm, sun-gold light. She has soft, leaf-green stripes. She loves to peek inside leaves. She wants to know what happens in there. She often says, "The leaf makes lunch out of light. Cells turn sun into sugar."

This is super important. Glow teaches about **photosynthesis**. That's a big, fancy word. It really just means "leaves make lunch from light." This is a huge secret. Most kids think plants eat food. They don't eat food like we do. Plants make their *own* food. They use sunlight, water, and air. They turn these things into sugar. This sugar helps them grow big and strong. They also make something else. It's called oxygen. They breathe out this oxygen. We humans breathe it in. Every animal on Earth needs this process. It's how they get energy. Glow shows us how this all works. It's like tiny food chemistry. It happens inside every single leaf. All the time. It's truly amazing. You can even see it. Just look closely enough.

Glow teaches about tiny cell parts. She shows that plants make food. Animals then eat that food. She has a rule: "Every green leaf has chloroplasts." Chloroplasts are the lunch-makers. This idea connects to other cool stuff. It links to how ecosystems work. It shows how the sun gives us energy. It's all about tiny cells. Knowing how things work makes them *more* wonderful. It's not magic. It's science.

Glow says: "I am Glow. The big idea I teach is **photosynthesis**." She adds, "And cell-level biology." She explains her main move: "The leaf makes lunch out of light. Cells turn sun into sugar." She makes it simple: "Sunlight + water + air → sugar. Lunch from light."

Glow's signature scene started. The whole cast gathered around a digital microscope. It was a special kind. It could show tiny things up close. Glow carefully placed a fresh lettuce leaf under the lens. "Watch this," she whispered. The screen flickered on. It showed a zoomed-in picture. The leaf looked like a green city. Tiny, boxy shapes filled the screen. These were the plant cells.

"Zoom in more," Glow said. She tapped a button. The image grew even bigger. Now, inside each cell, they saw tiny green dots. Hundreds of them. They were packed together. Like little green candies. "Those are chloroplasts," Glow explained. Her voice was full of excitement. "Each one is doing food-chemistry right now!"

She pointed at the screen. "See the sunlight hitting them?" The kids nodded. "Inside these chloroplasts, water gets mixed in." She looked at Drip. "That's the water Drip has been delivering to the roots." Drip puffed out his chest a little. "Then, carbon dioxide comes in." Glow continued. "The leaf breathes it in through tiny holes. You can't even see them!"

"So, sunlight, water, and air," she said slowly. "They all get combined. What do they make? Sugar!" She grinned. "The plant uses some of that sugar. It helps it grow bigger. A tiny seedling becomes a head of lettuce. Or a giant tree." She paused. "But there's a leftover bit."

"It's oxygen," Glow said. "The plant breathes it back out. Right into the air. That's the oxygen we humans breathe in. We need it to live!" She looked around at the amazed faces. "We're partners, you see. The plant feeds itself with light. We feed ourselves by eating the plant. Or by eating animals that ate plants." She tapped the screen again. "The whole chain starts right here. With these chloroplasts."

The cast stared at the little green dots. Their eyes were wide. They saw the tiny parts working. They imagined the sugar being made. "That's the real wonder," Sprig the mentor said quietly. He smiled at Glow. "And it's absolutely true."

He gestured out the window. "Every leaf you see. Every blade of grass in the park. Every tree standing tall. They are all doing this. Right now. All the time." He paused for effect. "It's like free lunch from light. Some people call it magic." He shook his head. "But it's only magic if you don't know how it works." He looked at the kids. "Knowing how makes it even more wonderful."

Glow's teaching is special. She doesn't want things to be a mystery. Some people think plants are just magical. They think we can't understand them. Glow says, "No way!" She shows that photosynthesis is real. It's knowable. And it's still wondrous. The chloroplast is a real structure. You can see it. The chemistry is balanced. This means the ingredients always add up. Knowing this makes the wonder grow. It doesn't take it away.

You don't need to be a super smart professor. Any kid can understand this wonder. You just need a plant. Maybe a basic digital microscope. Or even just photos online. Cell biology is for everyone. It's not just for grown-ups. The chloroplast is a wonder for all kids.

This idea connects to other lessons. It links to how energy flows in nature. The sun is a huge energy source. It connects to tiny cell parts. Glow is the first step. She shows how understanding makes things amazing. Photosynthesis is a perfect example.

HeatForge Glow is about heat. StarForge Glow is about stars. GrowForge Glow is about plants. All three are about energy. Energy given off. Or energy captured. It's a cool connection.

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## Voice register

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Careful-firefly-tween. Glow is awe-struck + cell



# Pot

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\*POT — \*a windowsill is a garden too. a yard is one variant. not the default.\*\*

Pot was a small finch, but she stood tall. She wore a chunky garden vest. It was terracotta orange with soft cream stripes. Pot always had a proud look on her face. She loved to find new ways to grow things. Especially in small spaces. Pot carried a special shelf. It was tiny, but it held many ideas. This shelf had a tracker too. It listed all sorts of containers. Yogurt cups, old takeout boxes, even milk jugs cut in half. Pot knew which plants fit each one. She also knew how to make sure water drained out. "A windowsill is a garden too," Pot often said. "A yard is just one kind. Not the only kind."

Pot taught a special kind of gardening. It was all about growing plants in pots. She called it **container + apartment gardening**. Pot believed that anyone could be a gardener. You didn't need a big backyard. A sunny window was all you really needed. Or a small balcony. Even a shared space in your building could work. Pot showed kids how to use everyday things as plant pots. An old yogurt cup could be a tiny garden bed. A window could be your whole field. She wanted everyone to know this. Gardening wasn't just for kids with big yards. It was for *every* kid. Pot always made sure everyone felt like a real gardener. No matter how much space they had. A windowsill garden was just as good as a yard garden. They were both real gardens.

Pot had a few key rules. First, use



# Tuck

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\*TUCK — \*every seed knows what it wants. read the packet, then read the soil.\*\*

Tuck was a careful vole-tween. He moved with quiet steps. His garden vest was a chunky cartoon green. A small seed-pouch hung from his belt. He also carried a soil-card. Tuck was small and very watchful. His fur was warm loam-brown. Soft cream stripes ran along his sides. He listened to the soil. He listened to the seeds.

Tuck always paid close attention. He wanted to know what each seed needed. He often said, "Every seed knows what it wants. Read the packet, then read the soil." This was his main rule. He used his seed-pouch and soil-card all the time. He sorted seeds by how deep they liked to be planted. He checked how much light they needed. He felt the soil to see if it was moist enough. Then he matched the soil to each seed.

This was really important. Tuck taught about **seed + planting**. It was the garden-craft of *listening-before-planting*. Many new gardeners just think seeds are all the same. They dig a hole. They drop in a seed. Then they add water. But that is not the whole story. Every tiny seed has its own special wants.

Think about a lettuce seed. It is super small. It likes to live near the top of the soil. Just an eighth of an inch deep. It also likes cool weather. A bean seed is much bigger. It likes to be planted deeper. About one inch down. Bean seeds love warm soil. Carrot seeds are thin like thread. They cannot push through hard dirt. They need gentle watering. Later, you have to thin them out.

The seed packet tells you most of this. But a smart kid does more. They read the packet. They also crumble a bit of soil in their fingers. Is it moist? Is it warm? Does it feel crumbly? That kid learns to listen to both sides. They hear what the seed wants. They hear what the soil says.

Tuck always said, "I am Tuck. The primitive I teach is **seed + planting**. The move is *every seed knows what it wants. read the packet, then read the soil.*" He looked at everyone. "Read both," he added. "The seed and the soil have to agree."

The group gathered by a sunny windowsill. Pot, who was good at finding things, had set up four small containers. Each had fresh soil. There were also four packets of seeds. Pot hummed a little tune. He carefully placed the packets on the sill.

Tuck picked up the first packet. He held it up for everyone to see. "This is basil," he said. "Basil likes warm soil. Plant it a quarter-inch deep. It needs eight hours of light every day." He put the basil packet down.

Next, he picked up a packet of lettuce seeds. "Lettuce likes cool soil," Tuck explained. "Plant it very shallow. Only an eighth of an inch deep. It needs four to six hours of light."

He showed them the marigold packet. "Marigolds like warm soil too. Plant them a quarter-inch deep. They need six hours of light."

Finally, Tuck held up the carrot seeds. "Carrots like cool soil," he said. "Plant them a half-inch deep. They need six to eight hours of light."

Tuck paused. He looked at the windowsill. He looked at the window. "This window faces east," he told the group. "So it only gets morning light. That's about five hours each day. It is spring right now. The soil feels cool to my paw." He crumbled a bit of soil. He let it fall through his fingers. "Which seeds do you think will fit here?"

Pot thought for a moment. He tapped his chin. "Lettuce and carrots," he said. "They like cool soil. And they don't need too much light."

Tuck nodded slowly. "That's right, Pot," he said. "Basil and marigolds want more light. They also want warmer soil. This windowsill is not right for them."

He looked at the group. "The seed wants what it wants," Tuck explained. "The soil and the light must agree. They have to be a good match. If not, the seed might not sprout well. Or it might not sprout at all." He paused again. "Then the kid might blame themselves. But it's not their fault. It's just a mismatch."

Sprig, their mentor, smiled. "The blame is the part to release," Sprig said softly. "Tuck listens. Tuck doesn't blame. The seed is just a seed. The soil is just soil. The kid is the listener between them. That is the real craft."

Tuck never said you needed a big yard. He never said you needed fancy tools. The group was planting on a windowsill. They used small containers. They used indoor soil. They used the light from an ordinary window. Gardening was not just for people with big gardens. Any kid with a sunny window could do it.

Tuck never said it was the kid's fault if a seed didn't grow. He called it a mismatch. "This soil and this seed and this light did not agree," he would say. "Next time, we will change one thing." The kid was not bad at gardening. The conditions just weren't right. Changing how you thought about it changed everything.

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## Voice register

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Careful-vole-tween. Tuck is patient + reading + listening; speaks in seed-needs + soil-conditions + matching-the-two.

## Cultural-sensitivity gate

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Nature-deficit + privilege + anti-blame gates LOAD-BEARING. Story-axis per ADR-016. **Windowsill-scale is the canonical scale; backyard is one variant, not the default.**

## Cultural-context note

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Seed-and-planting pedagogy: foundational in K-12 garden curricula (Edible Schoolyard, GROW NYC); kid-friendly planting framing aligns with USDA NIFA + extension-service kids'-gardening programs.



# Vigil

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\*VIGIL — \*look every day. don't pluck what's working. plants are patient teachers.\*\*

Vigil was a kid who moved slowly. They stood like a heron, tall and still. They wore a chunky garden vest. It was stone-grey with soft green stripes. Vigil always carried a small journal. They also had a symptom card. Vigil watched everything. They noticed tiny changes every day. "Look every day," Vigil often said. "Don't pluck what's working. Plants are patient teachers." Vigil's journal was special. They drew a quick sketch of each plant. They wrote down any changes. Was a leaf turning yellow? Was a stem drooping? Did a new bud appear? Did an insect visit? Vigil wrote it all down. They did this *before* doing anything else.

This was Vigil's main trick. Vigil taught the power of *observation*. They showed how to be a plant doctor. It was all about *watching before acting*. New gardeners often panicked. They saw a yellow leaf. They pulled it off right away. A stem drooped. They poured on more water. A leaf had a tiny hole. They sprayed it without thinking. Vigil did the opposite. Vigil *watched*. That yellow leaf might be old. Plants shed old leaves. That's normal. A drooping stem might be hot. It might perk up later. A leaf with a hole? Maybe just one bug visited. It wasn't a whole invasion. Vigil knew most garden "problems" fixed themselves. Or they needed very little help. The biggest mistakes came from doing too much. Vigil taught kids to write in their journals. They needed to wait a day or two. Then they could see if it was a real problem. Only then should they do something.

Vigil taught a big idea. It was okay to be wrong. "You might be wrong about what you're seeing," Vigil would say. Their main rule was simple. "Wait two days before you do anything." This was unless something was truly urgent. Vigil always said, "I am Vigil. I teach how to *observe* plants. I teach how to be a patient plant doctor. My rule is: look every day. Don't pluck what's working. Plants are patient teachers." They often added, "Wait two days. Most 'problems' aren't problems at all."

The cast had a windowsill garden. It was three weeks old. Pot checked it every morning. One day, Pot gasped. "Oh no!" Pot cried. A lettuce leaf was turning yellow. It looked sickly. Pot reached out a hand. They wanted to pluck it off. "Stop!" Vigil said softly. Vigil held up their journal. "Let's look closely," Vigil said. "Don't just react." Pot pulled their hand back. They watched Vigil. Vigil pointed at the yellow leaf. "See this leaf?" Vigil asked. "It's the oldest one. It's closest to the soil." Pot nodded slowly. "The new leaves look fine," Vigil continued. "They are bright green and healthy." Vigil drew the leaf in their journal. They wrote a note next to it. "Yellow on an old leaf is normal," Vigil explained. "The plant is just letting go. It doesn't need that leaf anymore." Pot frowned. "But it looks bad," they said. "It looks like it's dying!" Vigil shook their head. "If you pull it off now, you might hurt the plant," Vigil said. "You could break the stem. You could stress the whole plant." Vigil closed the journal. "Let's wait," they said. "I'll draw it again tomorrow. We'll see if more leaves turn yellow. If they do, that's a real sign of trouble. If not, it's just one old leaf. It's doing its natural thing."

The next morning, Pot rushed to the garden. They checked the lettuce. Only that one leaf was yellow. No others had changed. Pot felt a little relieved. They still wanted to pull it. But they remembered Vigil's words. They waited. The day after that, Pot looked again. The yellow leaf was gone. It had dropped off all by itself. It lay on the soil. "See?" Vigil said gently. Vigil pointed to the empty spot. "The plant taught us a lesson. We just had to watch it. We had to be patient."

Sprig, their mentor, smiled. "Vigil brings it all together," Sprig said quietly. "Tuck taught us to listen to the seed. Drip taught us to feel the soil. Glow showed us what happens inside the leaves. Pot learned to make any space a garden. Vigil teaches us *patience*. The garden talks slowly. A kid who waits hears more. A kid who reacts misses things."

Vigil taught a very important lesson. Our world often tells us to act fast. It says to fix every problem right away. But Vigil showed us a different way. Doing *some* work is good. Doing *too much* work can be bad. The right amount of help is true care. Most plants grow better with less fuss. They don't need a gardener always messing with them. This was like Drip's lesson about water. Just the right amount of water is best. More water is not always better. It was also like caring for animals. The right care is better than too much care.

Vigil also taught us to be humble. We might think we know everything. But sometimes we are wrong. Vigil made it clear. Gardeners are not always the boss. The plant knows best about itself. Our job is to watch. Our job is to understand. Then we can help in the right way. We must be ready to admit we might be wrong.

Vigil brought all the lessons together. "Gardening is a slow talk," Vigil said. "The plant speaks slowly. The kid who waits hears more. The kid who reacts misses things." Vigil looked at everyone. "Tuck taught us to listen to the seed. Drip taught us to feel the soil. Glow taught us what happens inside the leaf. Pot showed us that any space can be a garden." Vigil smiled. "I teach the *patience* that connects all these ideas. The garden is yours. You can grow it anywhere. You can make it any size. The plants will teach you. Just keep showing up to look."

Cross-app: Vigil echoes MindForge's intellectual-humility (epistemic-humility as cognitive habit); TruthQuest's Wonder + Update (slow-update on data); CreatureCare's "don't over-medicate" (animal-care parallel to plant-care); EthosForge's right-care-over-more-care; ChronoQuest's seasons-as-slow-time (gardening IS slow-time-craft).

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## Voice register

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Careful-heron-tween. Vigil is steady + journal-keeping + patient; speaks in waiting-48-hours + most-problems-aren't-problems + look-every-day.

## Cultural-sensitivity gate

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Anti-over-intervention + intellectual-humility gates LOAD-BEARING (closes cast arc). Story-axis per ADR-016.

## Cultural-context note

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Observation-and-plant-doctoring pedagogy: foundational in extension-service Master Gardener teaching ("integrated pest management" starts with observation, not pesticides); kid-friendly framing in K-12 garden curricula (Edible Schoolyard, GROW NYC, RHS Campaign for School Gardening).

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## Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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