

The Ugly Vegetables

Celebrating 20 Years!

Twenty years in print and still growing.



After attending Rhode Island School of Design, Grace Lin quickly set out to achieve her dream of creating children's books. Her first book, *The Ugly Vegetables*, was published in 1999 and became a best seller. As well as being an American Booksellers Association's "Pick of the List" and a Bank Street College Best Book of the Year, *The Ugly Vegetables* was nominated for the California Young Reader Children's Choice Award and named a Growing Good Kids Book Award Classic. *The Ugly Vegetables* continues to show up on lists of favorite children's books recommended by teachers, librarians, booksellers, and more.

Grace followed that success with the publication of over a dozen more books, including *Dim Sum for Everyone!*, *Bringing in the New Year*, *The Year of the Dog*, and many more.

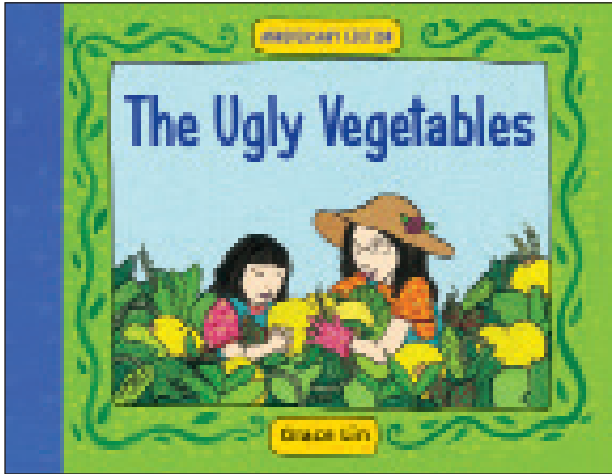
As well as being an occasional commentator for New England Public Radio, Grace has become an advocate for diversity. She created the video essay, "What to do when you realize classic books from your childhood are racist" for PBSNewsHour and delivered the popular TEDx talk, "The Windows and Mirrors of Your Child's Bookshelf." She continues to voice her thoughts on her two podcasts: *kidlitwomen** and *Book Friends Forever*. Grace truly believes, "Books erase bias, they make the uncommon everyday and the mundane exotic. A book makes all cultures universal."

Grace is a *New York Times* best-selling author and illustrator; she has won the Newbery Honor for *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* and the Theodor Geisel Honor for *Ling and Ting*. Her novel *When the Sea Turned to Silver* was a National Book Award Finalist and her picture book *A Big Mooncake for Little Star* was awarded a Caldecott Honor. Grace's art has been displayed at the White House, where Grace herself was recognized by President Obama as a Champion of Change for Asian American and Pacific Islander Art and Storytelling.

And it all began with the story of a garden full of ugly vegetables.

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About *The Ugly Vegetables*

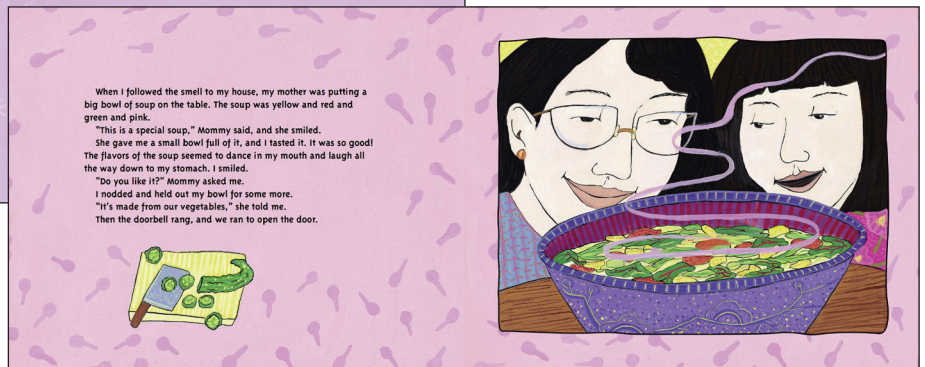
Spring is here and the neighborhood is starting to bloom, but one young girl notices that her family's garden is a little different from everyone else's. When she wishes for colorful flowers instead of ugly, fuzzy vines and stems, Mommy says, "These are better than flowers." Come harvesttime, the whole neighborhood agrees as those ugly Chinese vegetables become the most delicious soup they have ever tasted!

The Author-Illustrator

Grace Lin is a National Book Award Finalist, a Caldecott Honoree, a Newbery Medal Honoree, and a widely recognized advocate for diversity in children's literature. *The Ugly Vegetables* was her debut picture book; she has since gone on to write and illustrate over twenty-five acclaimed picture books, early readers, and novels. Grace lives in Florence, Massachusetts.



Our garden was all dark green and ugly.
"Why didn't we grow flowers?" I asked again.
"These are better than flowers," Mommy said again.
I looked, but saw only black-purple-green vines, fuzzy wrinkled leaves, prickly stems, and a few little yellow flowers.
"I don't think so," I said.
"You wait and see," Mommy said.



When I followed the smell to my house, my mother was putting a big bowl of soup on the table. The soup was yellow and red and green and pink.
"This is a special soup," Mommy said, and she smiled.
She gave me a small bowl full of it, and I tasted it. It was so good! The flavors of the soup seemed to dance in my mouth and laugh all the way down to my stomach. I smiled.
"Do you like it?" Mommy asked me.
I nodded and held out my bowl for some more.
"It's made from our vegetables," she told me.
Then the doorbell rang, and we ran to open the door.



The Ugly Vegetables

Praise for *The Ugly Vegetables*

★ “A savory storytime companion. . . . Lin tells her charming story simply, and the pictures reflect its many joys.”

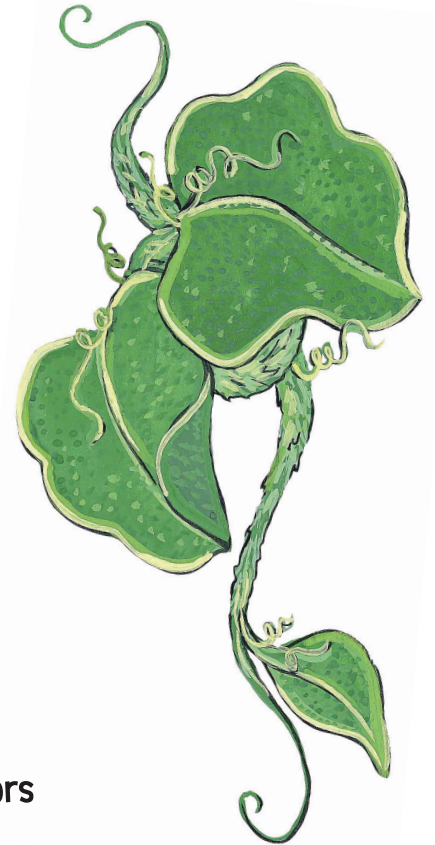
—Kirkus Reviews, starred review

“A lovely, well-formatted book with an enjoyable multicultural story.”

—School Library Journal

“Grace Lin’s debut picture book serves up the savory delights of the harvest in a satisfying story.”

—Horn Book Magazine



Awards and Honors

- ABA Kids’ Pick of the Lists
- NCSS/CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People
- Children’s Books Mean Business
- Austin Young Engineer’s Award
- California Young Readers Medal shortlist
- Growing Good Kids Book Award

The Ugly Vegetables

Read More

Join Grace Online!

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Lesson suggestions and downloadable activities for *The Ugly Vegetables*:

<https://bit.ly/2MC3wS7>

Press kit:

<https://bit.ly/2ZYrLg5>

Podcasts by Grace Lin:

[kidlitwomen*](http://www.kidlitwomen.com/)

<https://www.kidlitwomen.com/>

[Book Friends Forever](http://www.bookfriendsforever.com/)

<https://www.bookfriendsforever.com/>

TEDx talk by Grace Lin:

"The Mirrors and Windows of Your Child's Bookshelf"

<https://bit.ly/2ZXnNo0>

Grace Lin on PBS NewsHour:

"Your Favorite Book from Childhood Might Be Racist"

<https://to.pbs.org/308Wurb>

"Why Our Culture is a Seed, Not a Treasure"

<https://to.pbs.org/2MWwDih>

The *Ugly Vegetables* Charlesbridge webpage:

<https://charlesbridge.com/UglyVegetables>



The Ugly Vegetables

Activities

Pre-reading: Eat Your Vegetables!

Veggies aren't just good for you—they're delicious, too! You will need:

- A snack platter with a wide variety of vegetables
- An assortment of vegetable dips: ranch dressing, hummus, peanut or sunflower seed butter, cream cheese, etc.
- Raisins or other small dried fruits such as dried cranberries
- Paper plates
- Disposable or reusable kid-friendly table knives

Demonstrate how to build the classic "Ants on a Log" snack with celery or carrot sticks, then encourage kids to experiment with different dips and vegetables until they find a flavor combination they like.

Discussion Questions

Pre-reading:

- Look at the cover. What do you think this book will be about?
- Let's read the flap copy together. Do you want to change your guess?

Post-reading:

- Do you have a garden at home? How is it like or unlike the gardens we saw in this book?
- What other kinds of gardens can you think of? (i.e. a stone garden, a balcony garden in flowerpots, a greenhouse, a butterfly garden, etc)

Post-reading: Plan Your Garden!

With a little creativity, anyone can garden! You will need the following:

- Paper
- A variety of drawing implements: pencils, pens, markers, etc
- Other craft supplies as appropriate: popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners, glue, beads, etc

Distribute supplies and encourage kids to draw their dream garden. Some prompt questions that young gardeners may find useful:

- How big is your garden?
- Where is your garden located?
- What plants do you want to grow?
- Would you like to include furniture or decorations?

Post-reading: Start a Sprout!

A garden can start anywhere. You will need:

- Potting soil
- Small disposable paper cups
- A packet of flower or bean seeds
- A sunny windowsill
- Water

Fill each cup three-quarters full with potting soil. Hand out seeds and cups to each child and demonstrate how to push the seed in approximately two inches deep and add about a tablespoon of water. Place paper cups in the sun and continue to water regularly until sprouts appear!

The Ugly Vegetables

Ugly Vegetables: A Guide

菜

cài (zai)

This character emphasizes that the word refers to a vegetable.

空心菜



kōng xīn cài (kung shin zai)

This literally means “hollow heart vegetable.” The stem is hollow, like a tube.

苋菜



xiàn cài (shen zai)

This is a red-lined, red-rimmed vegetable.

韭菜



jǐu cài (joe zai)

Also called Chinese leeks, these look like blades of grass.

茼蒿



tóng hāo (tung how)

These have chrysanthemum-like flowers and edible leaves.

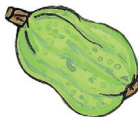
小胡瓜



xǎo hú guā (show hwang gwa)

Also called Chinese cucumbers, these are long, thin, and covered in bumps.

絲瓜



sī guā (see gwa)

The inside of this vegetable is spongy-looking. It tastes best when it is fresh.

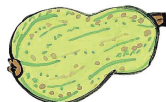
苦瓜



kǔ guā (coo gwa)

The Chinese means “bitter melon.” It is brightly colored, bumpy, and bittersweet.

葫蘆



hū lú (foo loo)

These are pale yellow gourds that are used for decoration.

The Ugly Vegetables

Ugly Vegetable Soup

Ingredients

- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups water
- 5 dried scallops
- 4 oz chicken
- cornstarch
- 1/2 cup chopped xiǎo hú gūa
- 1 cup chopped sī gūa
- 1 cup tóng hāo
- 1 cup xiàn cài
- 1 cup kōng xīn cài
- pepper to taste

Directions

- 1 Bring chicken broth, water, and scallops to a boil in a large pot. While waiting, cut chicken into bite-size pieces and coat them with cornstarch. Wash all vegetables.
- 2 When broth begins to boil, put in the chicken pieces, one by one.
- 3 When the chicken begins to look cooked (~5–7 minutes), add chopped xiǎo hú gūa and sī gūa.
- 4 Turn heat to low and let soup simmer for about 10 minutes. Then bring the soup to a high boil.
- 5 Quickly add the tóng hāo, xiàn cài, and kōng xīn cài and let them boil for 1 minute.
- 6 Add pepper to taste and serve! Makes 5 servings.

