



## Tokyo Digs a Garden

*Jon-Erik Lappano , Kellen Hatanaka (Illustrations)*

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**Tokyo Digs a Garden** Jon-Erik Lappano , Kellen Hatanaka (Illustrations)

**Winner of the 2016 Governor General's Literary Award for Young People's Literature — Illustrated Books**

Tokyo lives in a small house between giant buildings with his family and his cat, Kevin. For years, highways and skyscrapers have been built up around the family's house where once there were hills and trees. Will they ever experience the natural world again?

One day, an old woman offers Tokyo seeds, telling him they will grow into whatever he wishes. Tokyo and his grandfather are astonished when the seeds grow into a forest so lush that it takes over the entire city overnight. Soon the whole city has gone wild, with animals roaming where cars once drove. But is this a problem to be surmounted, or a new way of living to be embraced?

With *Tokyo Digs a Garden*, Jon-Erik Lappano and Kellen Hatanaka have created a thoughtful and inspiring fable of environmentalism and imagination.

## Tokyo Digs a Garden Details

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Author : Jon-Erik Lappano , Kellen Hatanaka (Illustrations)

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## From Reader Review Tokyo Digs a Garden for online ebook

### Kaline Jorgensen says

First of all, the cover is a work of art - and the story doesn't disappoint. Funny, dark, weird and poetic. I love how the book ends, in some ways by giving up control to the power of nature, they find a balance. Highly recommend.

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### Julie says

The artwork is fabulous and the story contemporary with a wink to a much loved fairy tale.

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### Meg says

Canadian author, Jon-Erik Lappano, and illustrator, Kellen Hatanaka, have created a modern day environmental fable about living in a small house in the city surrounded by giant buildings. There is little natural life anywhere. One day the boy, Tokyo, receives three seeds and plants them in the hard earth. The next morning, three small wildflowers are blooming. As time goes on, more plants are growing until flowers, scrubs, and trees are everywhere. Animals come back to the city and cause havoc in the streets. A river begins to flow through this new forest. What can be done to change this new environment? Children will be enchanted with this story about the greening of the city! (This book is for ages 4-8 and winner of the 2016 Canadian Governor's General Literary Award.)

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### Cheriee Weichel says

I've been thinking hard about what to say about this book. I've read it three times, and I'm still not really sure how much I like it. I like the lush colourful illustrations full of detail.

Tokyo digs a garden

I liked the poetic language.

Tokyo and his family live in a city, but his grandfather remembers what it was like before:

"Then, the house looked over hills and forests and Meadows and streams. Deer grazed on the hills. Foxes ran through the forest. Bird saying in the Meadows. Salmon leapt from the streams.

But now, all of that was gone.

Tokyo's grandfather said the city had eaten it all up.

Cities had to eat something, after all."

Similarly to Jack in the Beanstalk, Tokyo is given three seeds by an old woman. She promises the seeds will grow into whatever he wishes.

Tokyo planted the seeds in his backyard. In the morning three flowers were blooming. The garden continued to grow, taking over buildings, streets, and eventually the whole city. In a few days wildlife invaded the city and the people were forced to adjust.

I wanted to like this more than I did. Some pages have a lot of text on them, and to make matters worse, the black text on the dark background make it difficult to read.

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### **La Coccinelle says**

This won awards? That just goes to show how taste is subjective.

I thought this book was absolutely horrific. It would've given me nightmares as a child. Basically, a boy uses magic seeds to cause an apocalypse. The book then goes on to ignore all of the consequences of a sudden breakdown of infrastructure (and implies that you'll still be able to get ice cream, even though nature has taken over every building, road, and modern convenience we take for granted every day). The trees take over the city; foliage grows over cars; the hydrants flood the streets; and wild animals rampage everywhere, in a weird mish-mash that sees bison and bears hobnobbing with hippos and monkeys. And this is all portrayed as *good*, as something humans will just have to get used to. What happens when waste starts flowing through the flooded streets, causing outbreaks of disease? Or when workers are gored to death by the deer in their office lobby? It's one thing to wish for more nature in urban settings, but this goes way too far, glorifying a return to the days of danger and disease.

Also, the cat, Kevin, is just plain creepy. He's way too human, and the illustrations made me shudder. I wasn't a fan of the illustrations at all, really, but part of those feelings may have been coloured by my absolute loathing of the book's message. (Look, I'm not saying that environmentalism is bad. It's the glorification of what is essentially a nature apocalypse that I don't agree with. Teaching kids that a natural disaster is a positive thing is going to be a hard sell... especially to kids who've lived through things like floods.)

I didn't go into this expecting to hate it; but now that I've read it, I wish I hadn't. It's sad that this is what passes for an award-winning picture book in Canada. Was there really nothing better that year?

### **Quotable moment:**

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### **Claire says**

So very wonderful.

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### **Danielle says**

A weird and magical book with fantastic illustrations that bring their own flourishes to the story.

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### **Jack says**

"With *Tokyo Digs a Garden*, Jon-Erik Lappano and Kellen Hatanaka have created a thoughtful and inspiring fable of environmentalism and imagination." - Back cover notes.

Read three times now. Still very fond of the story and illustration.

Age Range: 3 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 2

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### **Dani - Perspective of a Writer says**

*Check out more picture book reviews @ Perspective of a Writer...*

Tokyo's house has been crowded by giant buildings, highways and skyscrapers where once there were hills and trees. When an old woman offers him seeds that will grow into whatever he wishes, he and his grandfather are astonished when a forest takes over overnight. Soon the whole city has gone wild, but is this a problem to be surmounted, or a new way of living to be embraced?

GAH!! An environmental message book that I LOVED!!! It's a take on Jack and the Beanstalk in the most enchanting and modern of ways... Tokyo, cat Kevin and grandfather are some powerful characters to take us through this fairy tale retelling!

THE ART IS KILLER! I mean it is the best digital artwork I have seen and just about blew my mind... from the simple drawings in the beginning to the complex jungle of the later spreads... The page where Tokyo and his grandfather explore the new forest is what we chose to draw and WOW!!!

The message is simple and not stated outright... Besides the simple message of the beginning of the story about where plants come from... we also need to TAKE RESPONSIBILITY for nature and our effect on it. We need to plant new plants and seeds and give them space to grow. Part of the problem is the current up and coming generations are living increasingly WITHOUT vegetation let alone forests and jungles! They need to be educated and this book is a good start to that!

Another book for the home library! It's perfect for all ages and has re-read appeal ALL over it!

**BOTTOM LINE:** Help save our environment!

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You can find this review and many others on my book blog @ Perspective of a Writer. See my picture book reviews in a special feature called Boo's Picture Gallery...

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### **Paul says**

Striking and imaginative illustrations, juxtaposing all kinds colors and shapes. The narrative follows a fairy tale with an over-abundant twist that the characters adjust to rather than reversing.

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### **Cara Byrne says**

A wonderful ecocritical story with some magical fairy tale elements that makes this modern day story feel classic.

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### **Kendra says**

WHY IS THE CAT SO WEIRD? I LOVE IT.

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### **KidsBooksWorthReading says**

Tokyo lives in a city. His grandfather tells him of the days before the city had "eaten up" the hills, forests, meadows, streams, and everything in them. "Cities had to eat something, after all." One day, an old woman gives Tokyo a few seeds and tells him that the will grow into whatever he wishes. He plants them and the next day they had grown and within a few days the wilderness had overcome the city. Rivers in the streets. Trees overgrew the buildings. Animals everywhere. The grandfather says, "What are we going to do?" And Tokyo says, "I think we will just have to get used to it. Gardens have to grow somewhere, after all." ? Oh how we wish we could create the dream world Tokyo created with only a few seeds. But we are doing our part this year by creating flower seed bombs to drop around our city. ??? #kidsbooksworthreading #kidsbook #kidsbooks #picturebook #kidlit #childrensliterature #kidsbookstagram #joneriklappano #kellenhatanaka #groundwoodbooks #houseofanansipress

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### **Margaux says**

Tokyo plants a seed in his backyard without knowing that in just two days, it will overtake the entire city! In the end, when his grandfather complains and asks what they're going to do, Tokyo says "I think we'll just have to get used to it."

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### **Maria says**

Meh. The cover is beautiful but the color on the pages is not as bright or vivid, and the style of the illustrations makes Tokyo and his kitty cat, Kevin, seem devoid of emotion and character. Skippable.

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