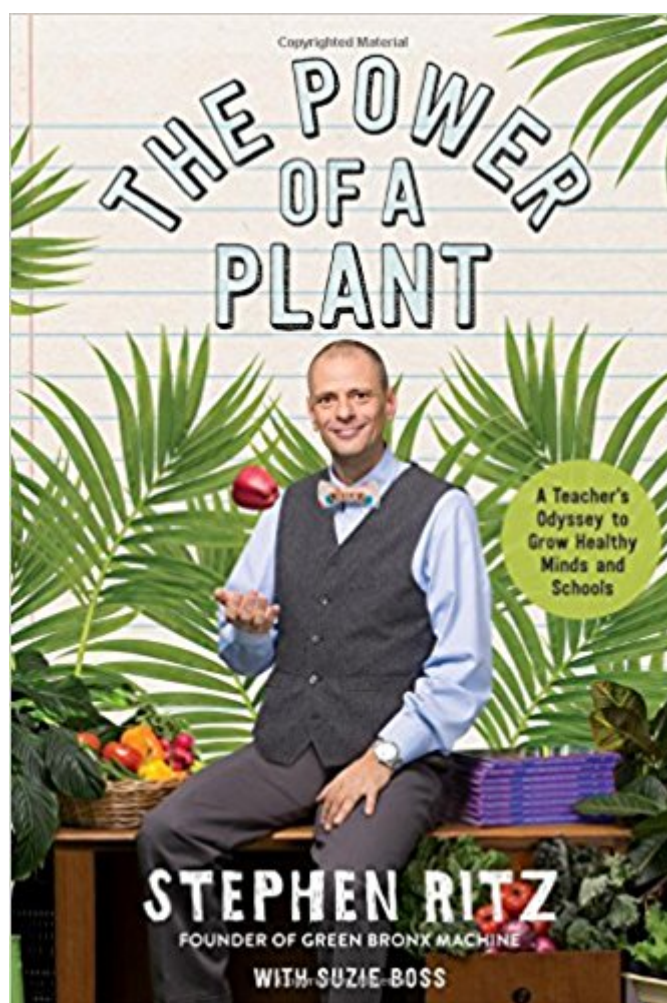


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# The Power Of A Plant: A Teacher's Odyssey To Grow Healthy Minds And Schools



## Synopsis

In *The Power of a Plant*, globally acclaimed teacher and self-proclaimed CEO (Chief Eternal Optimist) Stephen Ritz shows you how, in one of the nation's poorest communities, his students thrive in school and in life by growing, cooking, eating, and sharing the bounty of their green classroom. What if we taught students that they have as much potential as a seed? That in the right conditions, they can grow into something great? These are the questions that Stephen Ritz, who became a teacher more than 30 years ago, sought to answer in 2004 in a South Bronx high school plagued by rampant crime and a dismal graduation rate. After what can only be defined as a cosmic experience when a flower broke up a fight in his classroom, he saw a way to start tackling his school's problems: plants. He flipped his curriculum to integrate gardening as an entry point for all learning and inadvertently created an international phenomenon. As Ritz likes to say, "Fifty thousand pounds of vegetables later, my favorite crop is organically grown citizens who are growing and eating themselves into good health and amazing opportunities." *The Power of a Plant* tells the story of a green teacher from the Bronx who let one idea germinate into a movement and changed his students' lives by learning alongside them. Since greening his curriculum, Ritz has seen near-perfect attendance and graduation rates, dramatically increased passing rates on state exams, and behavioral incidents slashed in half. In the poorest congressional district in America, he has helped create 2,200 local jobs and built farms and gardens while changing landscapes and mindsets for residents, students, and colleagues. Along the way, Ritz lost more than 100 pounds by eating the food that he and his students grow in school. *The Power of a Plant* is his story of hope, resilience, regeneration, and optimism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

ENDORSEMENTS

“Education should unleash human potential, which is infinite in its capacity to create, know, and solve every conceivable problem. Stephen Ritz has opened a door to this unbounded field of possibilities, which he elegantly describes in *The Power of a Plant*.”

Deepak Chopra, New York Times bestselling author and author of *You are the Universe*

“Here’s proof positive that one person can make a difference. Stephen Ritz uses food plants to transform kids and their school environments. You can do this too!”

Marion Nestle, professor of food, nutrition, and public health at New York University, and author of *What to Eat*

“Building a new and effective Good Food system is everyone’s obligation, and it starts with education. Stephen’s epic story teaches us how to turn every community into a place that nourishes bodies and minds. He’s my hero.”

Will Allen, CEO of Growing Power and author of *The Good Food Revolution*

“Stephen Ritz is one of the most innovative, genuine, and tenacious educators I have ever met. He is the kind of superhero we need standing for our kids and their well-being. He uses gardening to inspire, challenge, and get kids growing in ways that transform their lives and communities. His story will touch your heart and propel you to plant a seed!”

Nona Evans, president and executive director of Whole Kids Foundation

“In his new book *The Power of a Plant*, Stephen Ritz weaves a beautiful personal tale of how boundless passion, purpose, and hope can move generations of students in New York’s tough South Bronx to realize their untapped human potential. Stephen uses the power of kindness and purpose to not only teach kids about the world but to create a better world for all of us.”

Daniel Lubetzky, CEO and founder of KIND Snacks

“The only thing bigger than the impact Stephen has had helping countless students understand the importance of their food choices is his infectious personality. *The Power of a Plant* outlines the remarkable work he has done to date and provides a blueprint for how educators around the world can implement his learnings effectively.”

Tom Colicchio, chef and owner of Crafted Hospitality

Stephen Ritz, founder of Green Bronx Machine, has devoted his teaching career to improving health

and academic results for children in the South Bronx. Now he is partnering with organizations from Canada to Dubai and Colombia to Cairo to bring the power of a plant to children and communities everywhere. A Top 10 Finalist for the Global Teacher Prize and one of NPR's 50 Greatest Teachers, he has presented at the White House on two separate occasions and had his classroom modeled by the U.S. Botanic Garden. His work has been featured by major media and documentaries, including Michael Pollan's In Defense of Food, and his TEDx talk has been viewed over one million times. Dubbed the Pied Piper of Peas, Ritz and his family reside in the Bronx and continue to farm with children all year round. His demonstration classroom, the National Health, Wellness, and Learning Center, is located at Community School 55 in the South Bronx.

I just got the book yesterday and I'm so glad I did!! The only thing more inspiring than Steve's story is to see him in person. Ritz has passion and enthusiasm that is so infectious. You can't help but like the guy. His story- and the work he does - needs to be shared with anyone who works with kids. This is a must read for educators!!!

Stephen's journey is a splendid adventure. It has hit me in the feels in all the right ways; making me laugh, cry, and smile on just about every page. This book is perfect for any teacher or human being who might be looking for inspiration. Stephen has accomplished so much in the toughest part of the Bronx, and he gives endless inspiration & insight into how he did it. No journey is easy, no one has it all figured out, but this book serves as a perfect role model for how to make change step by step. In case you couldn't tell, I had a lot of fun reading this book =)

This is an inspiring book that goes much further than the headlines that Stephen Ritz is already well known for. The author describes his many ups and downs on the way to bringing opportunity to teenagers in the Bronx in an entertaining and gripping way. In his storytelling, he is not trying to make it look easier or worse than it actually is. In some ways the challenges that he faced were enormous. In other ways, he makes the reader see that the young people in the Bronx are not different than the rest of us. They just don't have the privileges other people do. His many entertaining anecdotes illustrate what it means to bring change to a community. The book is also an excellent illustration of how different aspects of sustainability complement each other: Growing food locally using natural methods will protect the environment, educate the community, improve people's diets and bring money to the growers. Environmental, social and economic sustainability all in one!

A must read book. Highly recommend. Good for everyone and especially teachers. Stephen Ritz is such a role model and just look at his accomplishments. Awesome!

If you are a teacher and you have a passion for students and making a difference in their lives you need to read this book. It's not just about the plant or the gardening it's about the impact in the investment in students. In their lives. We find the catalyst that reaches them and speaks to them and we use it and leverage it to make them problem solvers, critical thinkers, analyzers, mathematicians and scientist and so much more. If you have an ounce of hope, of passion, of drive within you to really make a difference

Hit buy this book!

I was literally crying reading this book!! His passion for teaching and building relationships with children and the community is inspiring!! Thank you for sharing your extraordinary story!!

Probably not meant to be a tear jerker, but I couldn't help myself! What Stephen Ritz has done in his neck of the woods and started all over the nation is remarkable. He should be sainted!

I am a stem teacher who has aquaponics. I also have garden towers. This book motivated me to keep teaching.

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