ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

PICTURE BOOKS

The Bicycle Garden
Walter Williams
Fernwood & Hedges Books
978-0-9890698-2-3
Four Stars (out of Five)

Timka and Dasha decide to grow a bicycle by planting magical seeds in their backyard garden. With water and soil, a bicycle sprouts, and it grows beyond the garden and up into the sky. The siblings are still left without a bicycle to ride.

Author and illustrator Walter Williams has filled *The Bicycle Garden* with unusual illustrations. Boldly colored, these impressive colored-pencil drawings carry something of a folk-art feel. A delightful simplicity and naïveté give Williams's illustrations a unique, magical quality.

The book has a wonderful feel in the hand, and it is a perfect shape. It is beautifully printed; both the cover and the interior production quality capture the vibrant color and texture of the drawings. With only a few words per page, the focus is on the illustrations, and these will keep young readers engaged for the duration of the story.

Williams has successfully modernized the tale of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, setting it within an urban landscape. The writing has a mystical tone and is straightforward and entrancing. Although the story is blissfully unpretentious and uncomplicated, it could use a bit more background and perhaps a plot twist. Young readers may finish the book wondering where the beans came from and why the neighbors aren't complaining about the huge bicycle garden next door.

Nonetheless, *The Bicycle Garden* is written in simple language and with nice pacing to the story. Williams's appealing illustrations and suspenseful story will entertain many different age groups from preschoolers to early readers.

Colby Cedar Schoene