

Plant Parts We Eat

WHO ARE WE?

FALL



WHAT'S THE Big Idea? Diversity

Enduring Understandings

- We rely on each other and other living things to meet our needs.
- Plants have different parts. Each part has a unique role in supporting the plant.
- Different plants have different parts that are good to eat.
- A healthy diet requires diversity.

Objectives

- Children cultivate and grow some of their own food.
- Children show interest and curiosity about where their food comes from.
- Children experiment with tasting different foods.

Directions

For this experience, you and your students will need access to a garden or farm. If you are able, consider growing a garden at your school (see “School Gardening with Young Children,” p.202 and “Digging In,” p.204). If you lack space, you can grow vegetables in various containers.

1. As produce becomes ripe, visit the garden and show children how to harvest different types of produce, from peas in the spring to kale in the late fall. This allows children to follow the cycle of the seasons and plant growth. Invite your children to harvest and eat the produce right away. Eating straight from the plant never fails to tempt non-veggie lovers. If you are purchasing the produce, a field trip to the store gives children an opportunity to see the diversity of fresh fruits and vegetables available and the different colors, sizes, and shapes they come in. Gather and wash your harvest.
2. Offer the freshly harvested or store-bought treats to the children as you read *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens. Discuss what parts of the plants we eat when munching on carrots (root), lettuce (leaf), broccoli (flower), and tomatoes (fruit).
3. On a large cookie sheet, let children shape a plant with the harvested vegetables. Cut the carrots into thin sticks for the “roots,” add celery sticks for the stem, lettuce as the leaves, and broccoli pieces as the flower. Cherry tomatoes are the fruit to eat. Afterwards, eat all the parts of that plant!
4. Process and reflect on the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.



Materials

- *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens
- carrots, celery, broccoli, lettuce, cherry tomatoes (from a garden or a store)
- cookie tray
- cutting board and knife

Extensions

- Recruit Master Gardeners, parents, grandparents, or retired folks to lend a hand in the school garden.
- Invite a farmer to your class to talk about growing food.
- Plan for your garden in the late winter. Have children cut out pictures of vegetables and fruits from seed catalogs and make a map of what they'd like in the garden.

Discussion Questions

- Where does food come from?
- What is your favorite vegetable?
- What part of the plant is your favorite vegetable?
- Can you think of any other roots/leaves/stems/seeds/fruits that we eat?
- What should we plant in our garden next year?