



Got Veggies?

ECE Edition!



an early care and education garden-based resource

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Introduction

Welcome to **Got Veggies? ECE Edition!** This resource is based on *Got Veggies?: A garden-based nutrition education curriculum*, first published in 2009. *Got Veggies? ECE Edition* builds on the lessons and activities in *Got Veggies?* by adapting them to meet best practices for the early care and education (ECE) setting. Each of the four themes and two à la carte activities are aligned to the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards and offer concepts and tools developmentally appropriate for children aged five and under.

Gardens provide an excellent learning environment for teaching young children through hands-on exploration. Teaching concepts like how a plant grows from a seed and the benefits of eating a variety of foods are well-suited to a garden setting. When provided an opportunity to grow, explore, and prepare food from the garden, children of all ages develop a deeply personal connection with the food that sustains them. Research shows that lifelong healthy habits form early in childhood. This makes the early care and education setting the perfect place to support our youngest eaters through garden-based education!

The activities included in *Got Veggies? ECE Edition* can be an enjoyable and impactful part of your program's farm to early care and education efforts. Wisconsin Farm to Early Care and Education (WI Farm to ECE) increases access to local foods and enhances the quality of education in all types of ECE settings through:



Facilitating hands-on learning and play in nutrition, food, and agriculture,



Buying, preparing, and serving local foods in meals and snacks,



On-site edible gardens or container gardens, and



Engaging families and caregivers in health and wellness.

Any and all ECE sites such as group child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start/ Early Head Start, and 4K programs in K-12 school districts can do Farm to ECE. By implementing the themes and activities from Got Veggies? ECE Edition, you are partaking in WI Farm to ECE!

The four themes included in this resource are meant to be flexible to suit your program's needs. While described here as one comprehensive theme, perhaps you will choose to incorporate elements of each throughout a week or even over the course of many months. Look for suggestions for incorporating the theme through movement, stories, songs and fingerplays. Themes also feature ideas for your program interest areas like the sensory table or dramatic play area. Strategies for engaging family and caregivers are also included. Easily search by interest area or strategy by using the icons designed to help you meet your educational goals. For example, a fork icon indicates a theme or activity with a snack or meal time component like a taste testing. See below for a full listing of the icons.



-  Story time
-  Songs or fingerplays
-  Sensory activities
-  Movement or large motor activity
-  Snack or meal time
-  Dramatic play area
-  Family or caregiver engagement
-  Art
-  Mindfulness



The Main Menu

Garden-Based Themes

The Color Harvest

Overview

This colorful theme is a fun way to encourage young children to try new fruits and vegetables. Eating a variety of colors is important, as it gives little bodies the wide range of nutrients they need to grow, play, and learn. Repeat this activity seasonally to highlight the produce available during different parts of the year. For example, spring time can feature green peas and red radishes, while orange pumpkins and other winter squash are the perfect fit for fall.

Alignment with the Wisconsin Model

Early Learning Standards:

This activity helps children use their senses to explore and try new foods.

- I. Health and Physical Development B.EL. 2 Exhibits eye-hand coordination, strength, control, and object manipulation.
- III. Language Development and Communication A.EL. 2 Listens and responds to communication with others.
- III. Language Development and Communication C.EL. 2 Understands concept that the alphabet represents the sounds of spoken language and the letters of written language.
- III. Language Development and Communication C.EL. 3 Shows appreciation of books and understands how print works.
- V. Cognition and General Knowledge B.EL. 1 Demonstrates understanding of numbers and counting.

The Color Harvest theme connects to the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards through the Health and Physical Development, Language Development and Communication, and Cognition and General

Knowledge domains. Cutting fruits and vegetables allows children to exhibit eye-hand coordination and control. Children can show appreciation for books and listen and respond to communication during story time.

Connecting the tasting chart to snack or meal time helps children understand the alphabet represents spoken language and letters or written language like the names of fruits and vegetables. The tasting chart also offers an opportunity for children to demonstrate their understanding of numbers and counting as they track votes for preferred tastes.



Ideas for Interest Areas

Story Time

Read **Growing Vegetable Soup** by Lois Ehlert. Ask questions like those in the box to talk about the story. Stock the center library with this and other books featuring colorful produce. One place to find great book suggestions is the Multicultural Collection of Farm to ECE Books on the Ready, Set, Grow website: www.pareadysetgrow.org/book-list.

Snack or Meal Time

Materials: Fruits and vegetables, wavy chopper or other cutting utensil, tasting chart

Gather a variety of vegetables and fruits representing a rainbow of colors. Find produce in your garden or at a farm stand, farmers' market, or store. Some ideas are listed below.

Red: radishes, tomatoes, red peppers, strawberries, raspberries, apples, watermelon

Orange: carrots, sweet potatoes, butternut squash, pumpkin

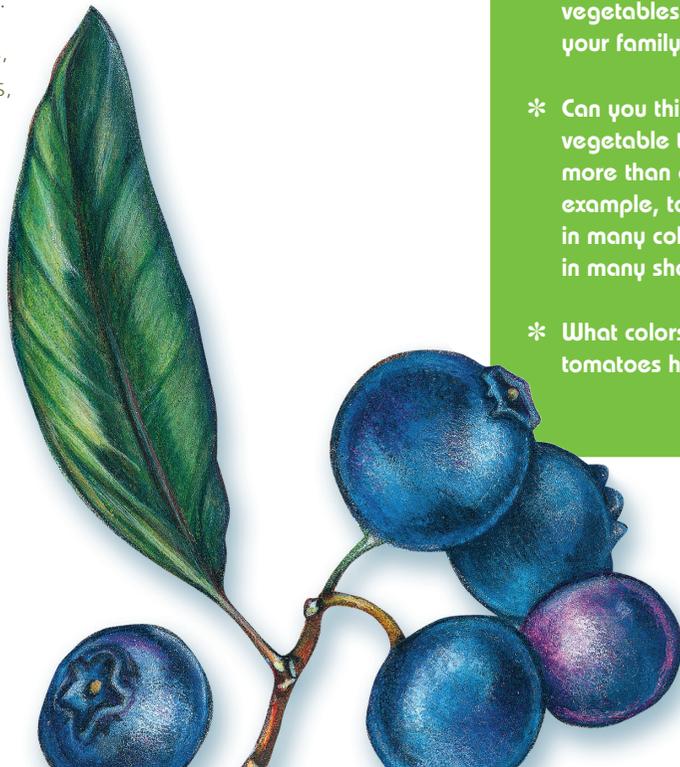
Yellow: carrots, corn, potatoes, summer squash

Green: collard greens, asparagus, kale, broccoli, zucchini, peas, celery, spinach, cucumbers

Blue: blueberries

Purple: grapes, eggplant, kohlrabi

White: cauliflower, white potatoes

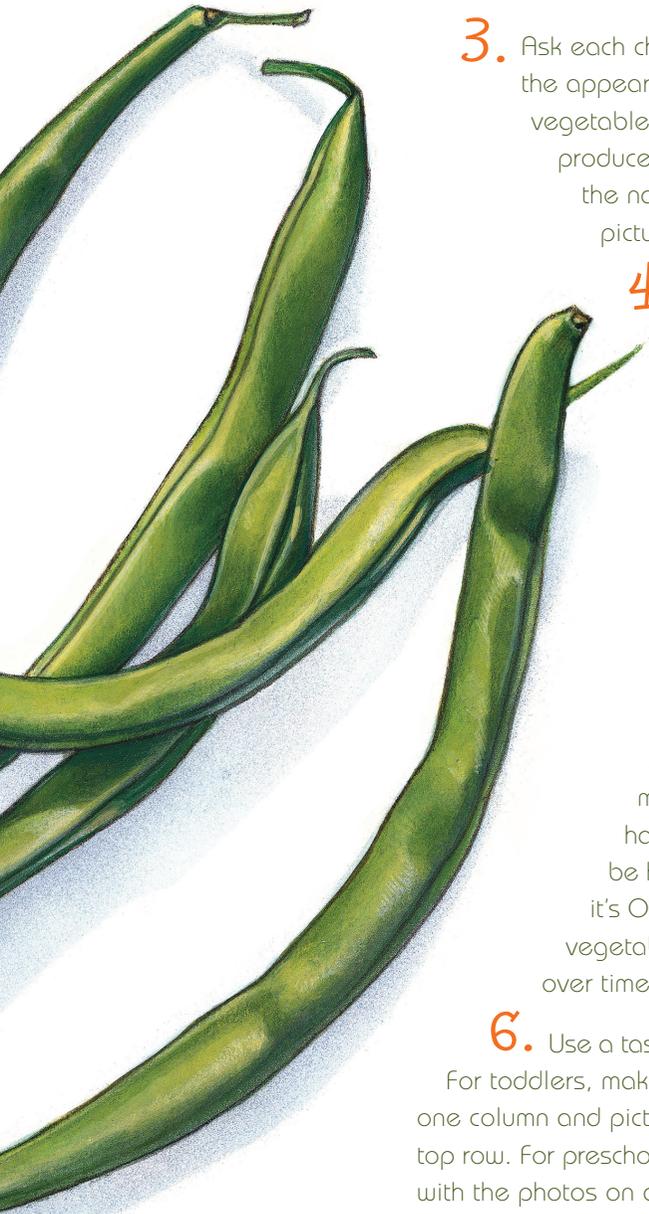


- * Where does food come from?
- * Who has a garden or knows someone with a garden? What do you grow?
- * Who has been to a farm? What did you see there?
- * Can you name some vegetables or fruits that are grown in a garden or on a farm?
- * Who has tasted any of these fruits or vegetables before?
- * Which fruits or vegetables do you like to eat as a snack?
- * Do you grow any of these vegetables or fruits with your family?
- * Can you think of a fruit or vegetable that comes in more than one color? For example, tomatoes come in many colors as well as in many shapes and sizes.
- * What colors and shapes of tomatoes have you seen?



Snack or Meal Time...continued

1. Prepare your fruits and vegetables for kids to taste with attention to food safety best practices. Wash produce under running tap water even if the produce will be peeled. Use a scrub brush on firm produce. After washing, keep produce on clean surfaces and use clean tools to cut, peel or slice produce.
2. Have children wash their hands.
3. Ask each child to use their senses (see, smell, feel) to observe the appearance, texture, and scent of the whole fruit or whole vegetable. Describe similarities and differences among the produce. To promote early literacy skills, print and laminate the name of each fruit and vegetable with a corresponding picture. Help the children match the produce with the word.
4. If possible, teach children to use a nylon knife or crinkle cutter to slice produce themselves. Very young children will need fruits and vegetables sliced or shredded for them. Doing so in front of the children offers an opportunity to use descriptive words about the color and texture that will build early literacy skills.
5. Next, encourage children to select a developmentally appropriate sized piece of each fruit and vegetable. It can be fun to taste the same fruit or vegetable together at the same time on a count of 3. Tell children before they bite that everyone might feel a little differently about the taste of the fruit or vegetable. Some programs recommend using a "Polite Bite" practice in which children refrain from making any comments or facial expressions until everyone has had a chance to try it and decide what they think. It might be helpful to remind children that whether they love it, think it's OK, or they do not quite like it yet, it is important to try new vegetables and fruits because they may develop a taste for them over time.
6. Use a tasting chart to collect information on the children's experiences. For toddlers, make a chart with photos of each type of fruit or vegetable in one column and pictures of faces with happy, neutral, and unsure faces in the top row. For preschoolers, write the names of the selected fruits and vegetables with the photos on a bulletin board or a poster.





7. Briefly review and compare vegetable and fruit descriptions. Have children vote for their favorite variety. Children can place stickers in the appropriate column or teachers can help mark their response. This could be a good chance to connect with a math skill. Count the votes and create a graph or chart to represent the results. Discuss voting results and the reasons why children chose one fruit or vegetable over others.
8. Solicit ideas for future snacks or meals that could feature the children's favorites. Rainbow kabobs, tasty smoothies, or a fresh salad are popular choices. Giving the fruits and vegetables fun names using descriptive words (super crunchy carrots or spleen green spinach) can increase the likelihood that the children will try them again during subsequent servings.

Songs and Fingerplays

Color Me Healthy. Sing & Dance. State of North Carolina (multiple partners).
<http://colormehealthy.com/songs-and-lyrics/>

Dramatic Play Area

Create a farm stand or market in your dramatic play area. Include play fruits and vegetables as well as some baskets for sorting. Watch as children shop for fresh produce from one another using the fun names you created during the tasting.

Family Engagement

Help children share their tasting experience with their caregivers. A simple sticker that says, "I tried _____ today" on a nametag or printer label will encourage conversation at home.



Seeds



Overview

This theme is sure to create a sense of connection to nature among children as they learn about what a seed needs to grow into a plant.

Alignment with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards:

Children can practice their large motor skills as they learn how seeds grow.

- I. Health and Physical Development B.EL.1a Moves with strength, control, balance, coordination, locomotion, and endurance.
- V. Cognition and General Knowledge B.EL. 6 Collects, describes, and records information using all senses.
- V. Cognition and General Knowledge C.EL. 2 Use tools to gather information, compare observed objects, and seek answers to questions through active investigation.

The *Seeds* theme connects to the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards through the Health and Physical Development and Cognition and General Knowledge domains. Children can move with control, balance, and coordination as they pretend to be plants. They can also collect and describe information and seek answers to questions through active investigation of natural materials in the sensory activity.

Ideas for Interest Areas:

Story Time

Read **The Tiny Seed** by Eric Carle. Encourage children to talk about what they noticed about the seed. What things did the seeds need to grow?

Sensory Activity

Collect natural materials like leaves, dried flowers, sticks, and seeds from the garden area and place in sensory table. Introduce the sensory table items by explaining that each is a plant part. Once they have everything they need, seeds will begin to grow into a plant. The stem or sticks will help carry water from the roots throughout the plant. The leaves allow the plant to capture sunlight. Flowers produce new seeds that start the cycle again. Encourage children to notice other plant parts while playing outside.

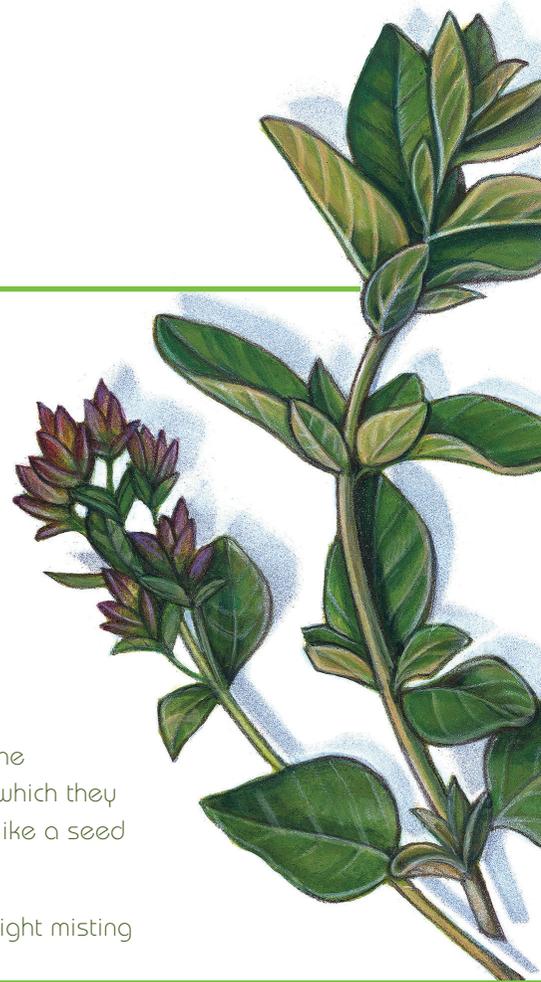




Movement

Materials: Spray bottle filled with water, paper fan to represent wind

1. Explain to the children that they are going to pretend to be plants, maybe even a plant from one of the stories you read. Remind children that there are parts of nature that help plants grow and they will remember what those parts are through this movement activity.
2. Ask children to close their eyes or turn off the lights in the classroom to simulate a seed that is buried in the ground. Tell the children that the ground that they are standing on is the dirt in which they will grow. Then have them crouch down on the ground or "soil" like a seed that has just been planted.
3. Next, go around with a spray bottle and give all the "seeds" a light misting of water. After receiving the water, encourage children to raise a hand in the air to simulate a seed sprouting through the soil.
4. Have children open their eyes (or turn on the lights) to receive sunlight. Tell children to rise a bit from the ground to demonstrate they are growing.
5. Finally, use a small paper fan or some other representation of wind to blow air on children, after which they can stand up and represent a healthy, mature plant.



My Garden

This is my garden; (extend one hand forward palm up)

I'll rake it with care, (make raking motion on palm with other hand)

And then some flower seeds, I'll plant (planting motion)

The sun will shine (make circle with hands)

And the rain will fall, (let fingers flutter down to lap)

And my garden will blossom (cup hands together, extend upwards slowly)

And grow straight and tall (sit or stand straight and tall)

— Original Author Unknown

Songs and Fingerplays

Begin chanting slowly and gradually pick up the tempo. Finish by slowing down and lowering voices to a whisper.

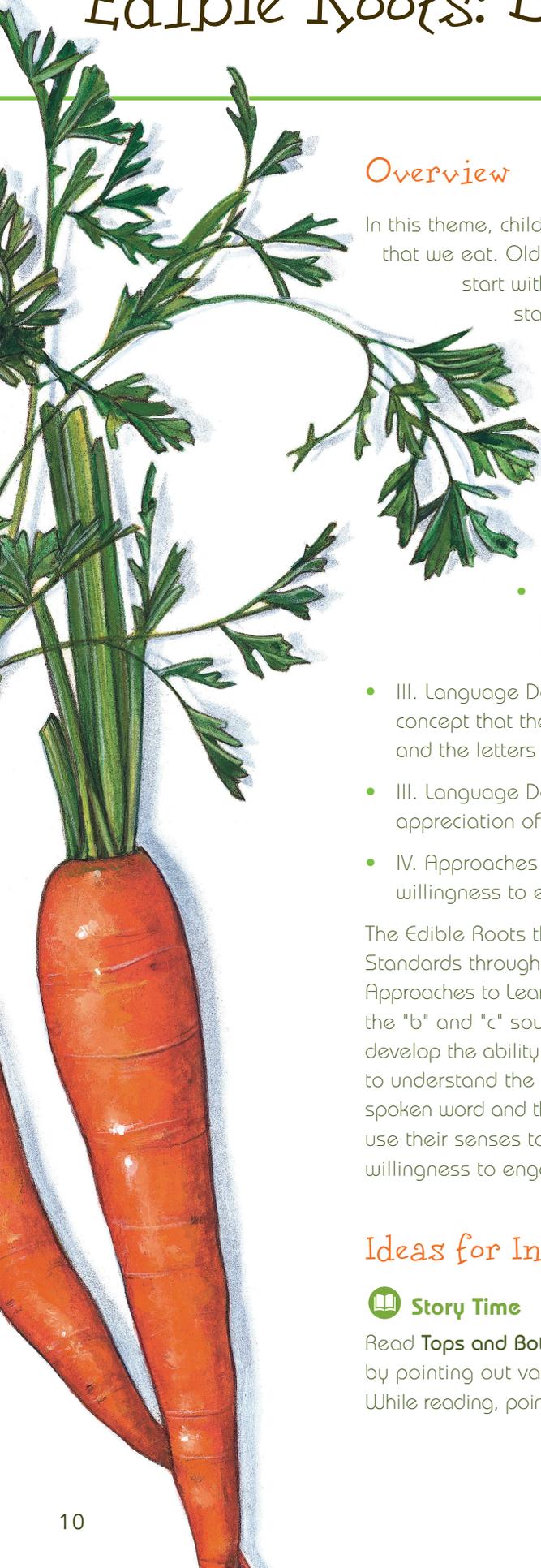
Chant: **Sun, Soil, Water, and Air!**

**Everything we eat and everything we wear,
comes from the sun, soil, water, and air!**

— by the Banana Slug String Band



Edible Roots: Beets & Carrots



Overview

In this theme, children will learn that beets and carrots are actually roots that we eat. Older children will identify what letters carrots and beets start with and use association to name other vegetables that start with those letters.

Alignment with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards

This theme gives young children practice with literacy and the sounds of written language during the Story Time activity.

- III. Language Development and Communication C.EL.1 Develops ability to detect, manipulate, or analyze the auditory parts of spoken language.
- III. Language Development and Communication C. EL. 2 Understands concept that the alphabet represents the sounds of spoken language and the letters of written language.
- III. Language Development and Communication C. EL. 3 Shows appreciation of books and understands how print works.
- IV. Approaches to Learning A.EL.1 Displays curiosity, risk-taking, and willingness to engage in new experiences.

The Edible Roots theme connects to the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards through the Language Development and Communication and Approaches to Learning domains. Reading **Tops and Bottoms** and practicing the "b" and "c" sounds helps children show appreciation for books, to develop the ability to detect the auditory parts of spoken language, and to understand the concept that the alphabet represents the sounds of spoken word and the letters of written language. As the children mindfully use their senses to explore the beets and carrots, they can display a willingness to engage in new experiences.

Ideas for Interest Areas

Story Time

Read **Tops and Bottoms** by Janet Stevens together, engaging children by pointing out various pictures and asking if they recognize things. While reading, point out the letters that beets and carrots start with and



have the children make the "b" and "c" sounds. After reading, talk more about the letters and have children name other fruits and vegetables that start with those letters (i.e., beans, broccoli, bell peppers, corn, cabbage, and cauliflower).

Sensory Activity

Create a mystery bucket by decorating an ice cream pail with colorful paper or fabric. Glue a piece of felt or foam over the opening. Cover with duct tape for extra stability if needed. Cut an X in the felt or foam, large enough for children's hands to fit through. Place a beet or carrot inside. Have children describe what they feel and guess what is in the mystery bucket.

Snack or Meal Time

Harvest or purchase a variety of beets and carrots. If time allows, this can be done with the children. The vegetables can be raw, shredded, or cooked (whatever is most developmentally suitable for the children) for this activity. After children wash their hands, encourage each child to try each variety of vegetable and give out stickers to everyone who tried something.

Mindfulness

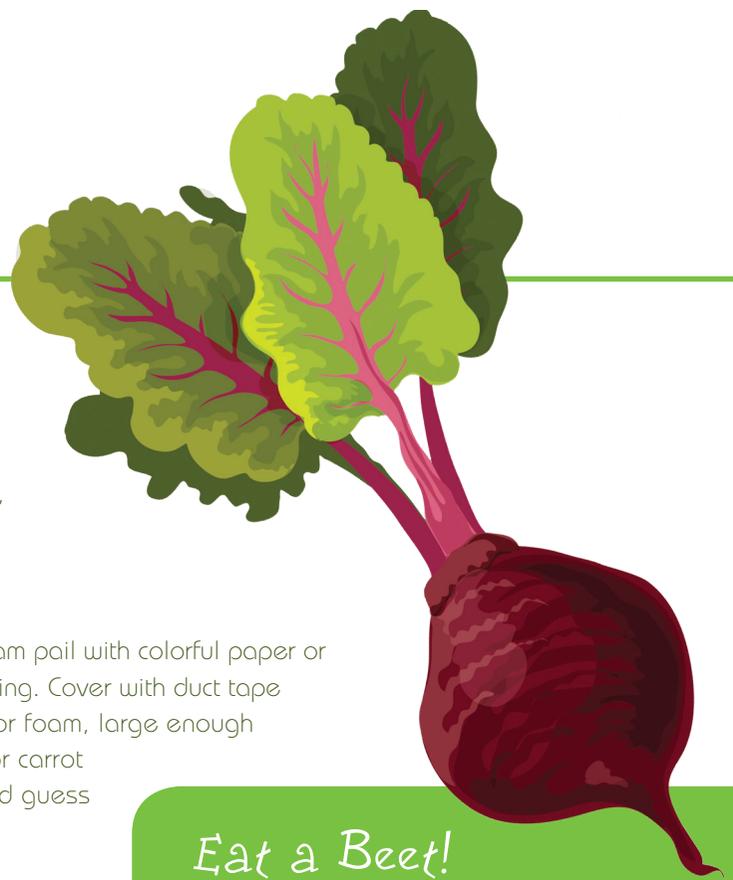
A taste test is a great place to add in a mindfulness activity for older children. Have them hold their vegetable and ask them to notice how it looks and feels: Is it rough or smooth? Hard or soft? What colors do they see? Next, have them smell it and think about how it smells. Does it remind them of the earth? Finally, ask the children to notice how the beets and carrots taste. Model words like crunchy, earthy, tangy and others that encourage careful observation.

Songs and Fingerplays

Sing the song above to the tune of, "If You're Happy and You Know It."

Family Engagement

Celebrate children as they try a bite (no matter how small!) by giving each child an "I Tried It!" sticker. In addition to serving as an incentive to try something new, the sticker could also serve as a conversation piece for families and caregivers. (<http://bit.ly/ITriedItStickers>)



Eat a Beet!

If you're hungry and you know it, eat a beet!

If you're hungry and you know it, eat a beet!

Beets are red, orange and striped;

Open wide, and take a bite!

If you're hungry and you know it, eat a beet!

Source: www.harvestforhealthykids.org



Worms



Overview

This theme gives children the opportunity to explore the natural world through hands-on interactions with worms.

Alignment with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards

- II. Social and Emotional Development A. EL. 1 Expresses a wide range of emotions.
- IV. Approaches to Learning B. EL. 1 Engages in imaginative play and inventive thinking through interactions with people, materials, and the environment.
- V. Cognition and Knowledge A. EL. 1 Uses multi-sensory abilities to process information.

The Worms theme connects to the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards through the Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, and Cognition and Knowledge domains. Using their senses to engage with worms, and describing their emotions as they do so, allows children to use multi-sensory abilities to process information and to express a wide range of emotions while engaging with their environment.

Ideas for Interest Areas

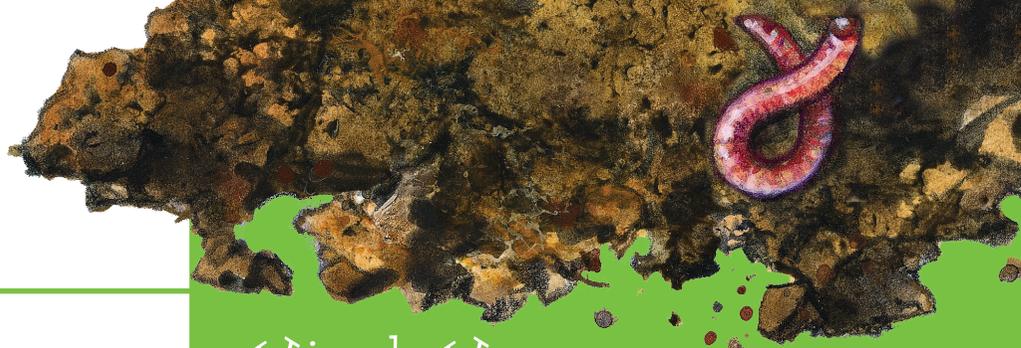
Story Time

Read **Wonderful Worms** by Linda Glaser. Help children create a connection to worms by observing all of the things worms do to help us. During this discussion, introduce some fun facts about worms!

Worm Fun Facts:

- Worms do not have eyes, ears, nose, or bones!
- Though worms don't have eyes, they are able to sense light and dark, preferring to be in the dark.
- Worms have five hearts!
- It is a myth that if you cut a worm in half, both sides will survive. Only the side with the five hearts will survive.
- Worms breathe through their skin.
- Worm poop is very rich soil!
- Worms' tunnels loosen up the soil and bring air pockets into the soil, which is important for plant roots to grow.





Sensory Activity

For this activity, earthworms from the garden can be used (kept temporarily in a container of moist soil), or you can start a composting worm bin using purchased red wiggler worms (earthworms from the garden don't work well for composting). Directions for a worm bin can be found in the original Got Veggies? on page 44 (<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p0/p00228.pdf>) For a small group of children, ask them to all stand around the container or bin so they can see in it at the same time. For a large group, it may be helpful to split into two groups where one is circling the bin and the other group is observing worms that have been separated out. Children may feel a variety of emotions upon seeing and handling the worms. Help them to name their emotions and gently encourage participating in what may be a new experience for them. While holding the worms, invite children to describe how the worms feel and look in their hands.

Here are two worm handling tips:

1. Keep your hands open, so that the worms can breathe;
2. If they start to wiggle a lot, they are probably too warm or dry and they need to go back into the cool, moist bin.

Have children help you add the extra snack parts like celery leaves or apple cores into the worm bin. This is a great way to reinforce the idea that worms will eat our leftovers and turn them into nutrients, which will help grow our food in the future.

Snack or Meal Time

Serve apples, celery or another fruit or vegetable with compostable waste. Save the apple cores to include in the worm bin.

Songs and Fingerplays

Sing the song above to the tune of, "Itsy, Bitsy Spider."

Family Engagement

Share the worms with other classrooms. Create a "Worm Watch" sign and place it outside the room containing the worm bin. In addition to letting children know where the worms are, it can also serve as a reminder to families to peek in the bin during pick-up and drop-off.

Wiggle Worm

Little Wiggle Worm (wiggle a stuffed animal, playdough, or pipe cleaner worm)

Went crawling underground. (wiggle worm under hand)

Down came the rain (wiggle fingers downward)

And mud was all around. (open arms wide)

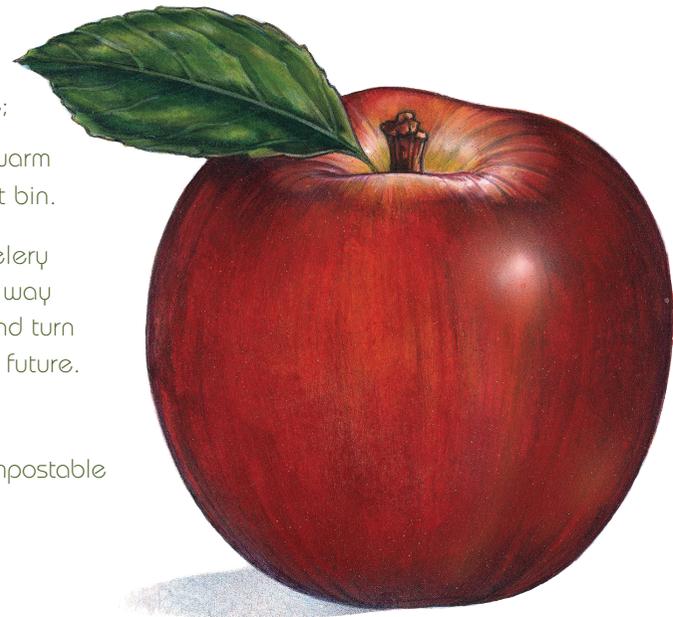
The rain filled his tunnels (open hand; move fingers together)

And pushed out Wiggle Worm. (push worm through other hand)

And soon the puddles on the ground (make an O shape for a puddle with your hand)

Were the only place to squirm! (wiggle worm into the puddle)

Source: preschool-plan-it.com





À La Carte

Additional Garden-Based Activities

Outdoor Art

The garden is a place where children can learn to appreciate the beauty of their natural world by engaging in artistic expression using natural materials. This activity can be adapted for programs without a garden by gathering natural materials during a nature walk.

Alignment with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards

- I. Health and Physical Development B. EL. 2 Exhibits eye-hand coordination, strength, control, and object manipulation.
- IV. Approaches to Learning B. EL. 1 Engages in imaginative play and inventive thinking through interactions with people, materials, and the environment.
- IV. Approaches to Learning B. EL. 2 Expresses self creatively through music, movement, and art.

Supplies

An area inside or outside of the garden with a sink nearby. A range of plant and other materials from the garden (leaves, rocks, sticks, flowers,). Drawing paper, paper towels, washable paints, paper plates for paint.

Directions

To prepare for this activity, cover tables with plastic table cloths or newspaper. Set up plates with different color paints. Add another container with a variety of nature pieces from the garden. Explain that you are working to open an art gallery filled with outdoor art paintings and each child has the opportunity to create a piece for it. Model how the children can use leaves and other natural objects dipped in paint as stamps or brushes.



Color Walk

Create a scavenger hunt that involves searching for a variety of different colors of fruits, vegetables, and flowers in the garden or another outdoor space.

Alignment with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards

- II. Social and Emotional Development C.EL. 2 Engages in social interaction and plays with others.
- V. Cognition and General Knowledge B.EL. 4 Uses the attributes of objects for comparison and patterning.
- V. Cognition and General Knowledge C.EL. 2 Uses tools to gather information, compare observed objects, and seek answers to question through active investigation.

Supplies

Colored paper or paint color sample strips from a hardware store

Directions

Cut colored paper into squares or collect paint color strips from a hardware store. Color samples might include a variety of different colors, or even many shades of the same color. Without picking or otherwise removing the plant, ask children to match the color sample to something in the garden or outdoor space. Have the children work together as pairs to help each other find the color matches. As an extension, take a picture of the children's discoveries and make a book for your library.





Cooking & Eating from the Garden

Eating Fruits & Vegetables in the Garden

Growing, cooking, and tasting activities are proven ways to encourage children to try new fruits and vegetables! When they take part in the process of growing and preparing food, children enthusiastically incorporate more vegetables and fruit into their diets. From starting seeds to preparing meals, children can learn healthy habits now that will support them through a lifetime of nutritious eating.

Cooking in the Garden

Cooking is a favorite activity for children. Young children can be involved in preparing snacks and meals featuring garden produce by washing or scrubbing the harvested fruits and vegetables. They can also tear lettuce for a salad or snap peas, measure dry and liquid ingredients, and chop, mix, and mash a variety of different ingredients. To make the cooking experience fun and safe, it is important to have the right tools. A list of tools well suited to young children is included here:



- Colorful plates, bowls, and cutting boards are fun for children to use.
- Stainless steel strainers for washing fresh garden produce.
- Stainless steel bowls of various sizes can be used for collecting and mixing ingredients from the garden.
- Big wooden and stainless steel spoons for mixing and mashing.
- Wavy choppers, nylon knives, scissors, spiralizers, or pull-string choppers can be used by children with adequate modeling and supervision.



Safety Tips

Here are a few simple things to remember when cooking and preparing food from the garden.

1. Raw fruits and vegetables may be a choking hazard for very young children. Cut fruits and vegetables into quarters or very small pieces or cook to soften before serving.
2. Hygiene is important. Make sure children wash their hands prior to any cooking or eating activities.
www.fightbac.org/kidsfoodsafety/young-children-child-care-training/
3. Rinse fresh produce under running water before eating. For more on fruit and vegetable food safety, visit www.cdc.gov/features/foodsafetyquiz/index.html.
4. Practice good food safety — keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. For more information and resources for talking about food safety with children, visit https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/basics-for-handling-food-safety/ct_index.





Garden Activity Recommendations by Age

When planning garden activities, it can be helpful to know which tasks are developmentally appropriate for young children. Here are some suggested guidelines for children of different ages:



Infants

- Engage infants by creating opportunities for them to move through the garden. Children who are crawling may enjoy vine covered tunnels to explore.
- Allow supervised access to scented plants that are entirely edible like mint, basil, dill, and lemon balm. Infants can smell, touch, and taste them.
- If the soil is safe (see **Safety in the Little Gardener's Garden** <https://learningstore.uwex.edu/Assets/pdfs/A3905-07.pdf>), encourage infants to touch it, dig in it, or finger paint with mud.



Toddlers

- Direct children to water each plant with a child-sized watering can or milk jug with holes poked in the top.
- Toddlers can freely dig in a special digging area. Designate rotating digging areas with a picture of a shovel.
- Hand-harvesting of cherry tomatoes and strawberries will be easy for this age group, as will digging up sweet potatoes, carrots, and other root crops with some help loosening the soil.



3- to 4-year-olds

In addition to what toddlers can do, 3- to 4-year-olds can:

- Move mulch or straw around with small wheelbarrows and add it to paths or planting beds.
- Plant larger seeds, vegetable seedlings, and larger plants.
- Pick insects off of plants or pluck mint or basil leaves for harvest.

Preschoolers and school-age children

In addition to what 3- to 4-year-olds can do, preschoolers and school-age children can:

- Thin seedlings, plant smaller seeds, and sift compost through a screen.
- Pull weeds. Use a sprinkling of flour to identify what should be pulled.
- With proper supervision, harvest produce or flowers using scissors or garden clippers and make bouquets for families.





Resources

- **Got Dirt?:**
www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p4/p40112.pdf
- **Got Veggies?:**
www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p0/p00228.pdf
- **Cultivating Childhood Wellness through Gardening:**
www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/physical-activity/foodsystem/gardening.htm
- **Safety in the Little Gardeners' Garden:**
<https://learningstore.uwex.edu/Assets/pdfs/A3905-07.pdf>
- **Community GroundWorks Farm to ECE:**
<http://communitygroundworks.org/content/farm-early-care-and-education>
- **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Farm to ECE:**
<https://dpi.wi.gov/community-nutrition/cacfp/farm-2-ece>
- **Wisconsin School Garden Network:**
<http://wischoolgardens.org>





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