

Plant Parts

Key Concepts:

- Plants look very different, but they all have the same parts
- Plants parts include roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruit and seeds

Activity: Fruit and Vegetable Art

Overview: Make eating fruits and vegetables fun by guiding students to turn their plate into a consumable work of art while also learning about different plant parts.

Materials:

- A variety of fruits and vegetables cut into various size pieces and representing different plant parts. A list of ideas can be found below in Step 2.
- 2 or more plates (one for cutting and one for eating for each child)
- Cutting utensils (optional)
- Toothpicks (optional)
- Dips such as ranch or yogurt (optional)



Instructions:

Prep Work: Collect a variety of fruits and vegetables to eat representing all the different plant parts. They can be cooked or raw and fresh, canned or frozen depending on availability and age of your students.

1. Introduce students to the different parts of the plant. Go on a scavenger hunt to look at plants and locate the different parts. Point out how the plant parts come in different shapes and sizes. Explain how each part has its own job:
 - Roots - Hold the plant in place and drink up water and nutrients from the soil
 - Stems - Help move water and nutrients into the leaves and keep the plant off the ground
 - Leaves - Make the plant's food
 - Flowers - Make the plant's seeds
 - Fruit - Provides a package for the plant's seeds
 - Seeds - Contain new baby plants
2. Share that we eat different parts of different plants. Show kids different plant parts we eat using real fruits and vegetables or pictures of common fruits and vegetables. Play a plant part game and have them sort your examples by different part. Here are some ideas for your game:
 - Roots - beet, carrot, radish, sweet potato, turnip
 - Stems - asparagus, garlic, white potato

Leaves - cabbage, lettuce, parsley, spinach

Flowers - broccoli, cauliflower

Fruit - apples, avocados, cucumbers, green beans, peppers, squash, tomatoes

Seeds - corn, peas, rice, sunflower seeds

Make sure to also mention to students that not all plants and not all plant parts should be eaten. Explain that some can make us very sick, so we want to make sure that we only eat plant parts that are grown to be food.

3. If fresh, wash and dry the produce you collected for your fruit and vegetable art snack and then cut them into bit-sized pieces and place in a bowl or on a plate. Prepare frozen or canned fruits and vegetables as needed (cook, thaw and/or drain and rinse). Depending on the age and skill level, allow children to help with prep as appropriate. Plastic knives may work well for many items and can be safe for young children. You can use small cookie cutters in the shapes of circles, stars, etc. or a melon baller for additional options.
4. Give each child a second plate to serve as a workspace and then set them loose to create a 3-D picture or mini sculpture using the fruits and vegetables provided. Depending on their age, you can also give them toothpicks to help their creation take form. They can complement their art work with dip or dressing.

If your kids need some inspiration, author Saxton Freymann has a collection of books at <https://www.eeboo.com/collections/saxton-freymann> featuring creatively carved fruits and vegetables you may want to check out.

5. Once complete, snap a photo of each creation to document their art. Once you have a collection of photos, the children may even want to create a storybook showing off their fruit and veggie creations.
6. Have them take one last look to enjoy the beauty of the creations and then start eating!

Activity Extension: You can extend your lesson by also talking about eating a rainbow of fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables come in a wide variety of colors. Eating a Rainbow (<https://www.kidsgardening.org/lesson-plans-eat-a-rainbow/>) is not only fun, but it also provides a health boost since the pigments in the fruits and vegetables responsible for the color are also indicators of some of the nutrients available. Instead of focusing on displaying all the plant parts in your artwork, you can create plates showing off the full rainbow.

Discovery Station Ideas:

- Set up a station where the kids can continue to sort fruits and vegetables by plant part into different baskets or buckets. You can use real examples, artificial/play food or laminated pictures of different fruits and vegetables.
- Make a collection of seed viewers. You can make simple seed viewers using dried beans, plastic cups and paper towels that allow kids to see roots, stems and leaves of the plant as they start to grow. Instructions can be found at: <https://www.kidsgardening.org/garden-activities-seed-viewer/>. Start a couple of different seed viewers each day for a week and then bring them in and let the kids sort them by stage.

Related Books:

Oliver's Vegetables by Vivian French

Tops and Bottoms by Janet Stevens

What do Roots Do? by Kathleen Kudlinski

Additional Resources:

For information on how gardening activities align with Head Start Program Performance Standards and the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, download the National Farm to School Network's excellent resource - Growing Head Start Success with Farm to Early Care and Education available at:

<http://www.farmentoschool.org/resources-main/growing-head-start-success-with-farm-to-early-care-and-education>

More gardening resources for early childhood educators are available at <https://kidsgardening.org/ece-resources/>