

Lesson 3: Harvest Calendar



Time Allotted

25 Minutes

Target Audience

Grades 5-8



Objectives

- Students will examine the tasks a farmer does on the farm during each month
- Students will differentiate between growing and harvest seasons
- Students will identify the annual cycles of work on a farm

Materials

- Birthday month signs: name of each month on 8½" x 11" paper with fruits and vegetables harvested and farm tasks conducted in that month listed on back (see appendix)
- Land Connection calendar: <http://thelandconnection.org/community/farmer-annotated-calendar>
- Images of foods grown in local region during each month (optional)
- Images of farming tasks for each month (optional)
- USDA Hardiness Zone Map: usna.usda.gov/Hardzone/ushzmap.html

Summary

Students explore the work farmers do year-round to grow the foods we eat.

Background

We associate farms with summer bounty and fall harvests, but farmers work year-round to produce the fruits and vegetables we eat. This lesson introduces students to what takes place on farms each month in the growing year. Students will be instructed to form a circle and position themselves in the circle according to their birth months. This arrangement will help demonstrate that the work of a farmer does not end, but is instead a cycle that repeats each year.

This activity requires teachers to make a sign for each month of the year (or use the ones in the appendix) that features the fruits and vegetables that can be harvested that month. Climates vary in each region of the world, and climate determines what foods can grow in each region. In the United States, regions are defined by hardiness zones. Each hardiness zone is identified by a number that indicates climate tendencies and plant needs. To find out your zone, search for your region on the USDA's hardiness zone map (see materials section for URL). Then search for a local harvest calendar for your zone which tells what fruits and vegetables can be grown during particular times of year.

Method

- Tell students:** Food in our area is growing on farms almost year-round. When food is not growing, farmers are still busy working to prepare for the upcoming season. We're going to make a human calendar that displays what is going on at the farm each month.
- Have students gather in groups according to their birthday month. Assign each group the sign displaying their birthday month. On the back of each sign, list the fruits and vegetables that can be harvested in Illinois during that month. If no fruits and vegetables can be harvested that month (for example, in January, when winter weather prevents food growth), list tasks that farm workers are performing to prepare for the next season. Use the Land Connection calendar listed in the materials section or have the students research.
- OPTIONAL:** Lay images of foods and farming tasks on the table. Have students read the back of their group's sign. Tell students to choose the food that grows or the activity that takes place on the farm in their birthday month.

4. Tell students to arrange themselves in a circle, starting with January and going through December.

Next, have the students describe the typical weather in that month, and then share with the class what is happening on the farm, what is growing, and what crops are being harvested.

5. Engage students in conversation by asking the following

questions:

- In what months do most fruits and vegetables grow? Why?
- Why are we standing in a circle?
- What are the farmers doing during the winter months?

Extensions

- Invite a farmer to speak to your class. Have students create a list of questions for the farmer prior to the presentation in addition to impromptu questions that may arise during the presentation. Following the visit, have the students complete the On the Farm worksheet (following this lesson). In the “community plot,” they can add a new fruit or vegetable they learned about during the visit.
- Discuss seasonality and why tomatoes purchased in January are probably not local to your region. What are the pros and cons to purchasing foods in season?
- Find video clips and images of farm tasks and monthly harvests to help illustrate seasonal farm work.
- Play “Farm Charades”. Have students act out farm activities in the form of a game.

Younger Audience Adaptation

For a younger audience, invite a farmer to speak to the class and hand out the On the Farm worksheet (following this lesson) and have students use it to guide questions and discussion.

Sources

Kelly Joslin, Green Earth Institute

On the Farm . . .

IT'S HARVEST TIME FOR FARMERS PAT AND PAT
LOOK IN THEIR BASKET TO DISCOVER WHAT'S GROWING
AT THE FARM THIS YEAR. USING THE CLUES PROVIDED,
DRAW THE FOODS ON THE CORRECT PLANT FOR HARVEST.

APPLES
HONEY
CARROTS
SQUASH
PEARS
HERBS

TOMATOES
GRAPES
PEPPERS
SPINACH
BLUEBERRIES
EGGPLANT

WINTER HARVEST
~FLAVOR BED~

