

# POTATOES & SWEET POTATOES

## ACTIVITY PLAN



**Russet • White Sweet Potatoes • Yukon Gold  
Blue Potatoes • Orange Sweet Potatoes**

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★ INDICATES A FULL LESSON PLAN



# Circle Time

Use circle time activities to explore fruits and vegetables through read-aloud books and other activities. Read and discuss books, pass around and talk about the featured fruit or vegetable, show and discuss Harvest for Healthy Kids picture cards, play a paper bag guessing game, and more!

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# ★ READ ALOUD BOOK AND DISCUSSION

## Dr. Strong and Sweet Potatoes

### OBJECTIVES:

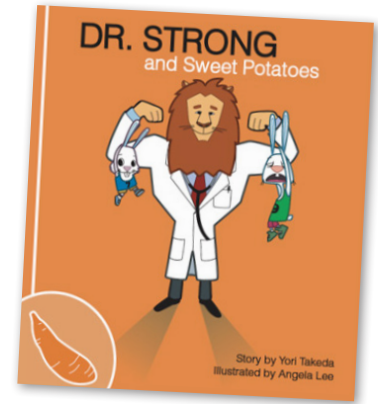
1. Children learn that fruits and vegetables are part of a healthy diet.
2. Children learn that sweet potatoes are a vegetable and a healthy food.
3. Children describe other different ways to stay strong and healthy (eat healthy foods, play outside).

### WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

Book: *Dr. Strong and Sweet Potatoes* by Yori Tokeda

A sweet potato and potato to pass around

Chart paper and markers



### WHAT YOU MIGHT DO:

- Tell children that this month we will be learning about potatoes and sweet potatoes.
- Pass around the sweet potato and potato before reading the story or while you are reading. Tell children to feel and smell the sweet potato and potato. Ask the children: How are the sweet potato and the potato the same or different?
- Read *Dr. Strong and Sweet Potatoes*. Talk about how sweet potatoes are a vegetable. Talk about how fruits and vegetables, like sweet potatoes, are healthy foods. These foods keep us strong. While you are reading, ask children questions like:
  - Have you ever tried a sweet potato? What does it taste like?
  - How do sweet potatoes grow? How do potatoes grow? (Both grow underground.)
  - What does Dr. Strong tell the children they should eat to stay strong and healthy?
- Make a healthy foods chart with the children. Ask children to name some healthy foods that they like to eat (e.g. fruits and vegetables). Ask the children to name some “sometimes” foods – foods that are less healthy (e.g. candy, cookies, french fries).
- Discuss with children that we can eat unhealthy foods once in awhile as a treat, but that it is important to eat healthy foods every day to grow up strong.
- Read *Dr. Strong and Sweet Potatoes* over multiple days. Have children help you review the story and remember where you left off.

\* Lesson adapted from “Farm-to-Preschool Harvest of the Month Activity Packet: October, 2009.”

**VOCABULARY**  
sweet potato  
sprout  
root  
slip



## BOOK LIST

Move beyond the featured book! Here are some ideas for books to read during the sweet potatoes and potatoes month:

### AND THE GOOD BROWN EARTH

By: Kathy Henderson

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** strawberries, potatoes, carrots, parsnips, beets, beans, greens, tomatoes, blackberries

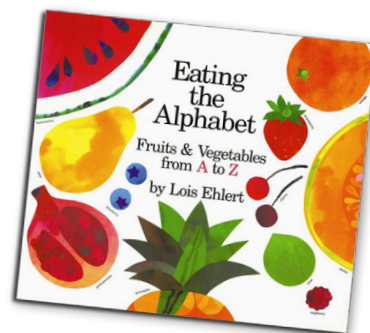
Gram and young Joe plant gardens together. As the seasons change, the vegetables grow, until harvest day arrives! All thanks to the good, brown earth.



### EATING THE ALPHABET

By: Lois Ehlert

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** apricots, artichokes, avocados, apples, asparagus, blueberries, brussel sprouts, beans, beets, broccoli, bananas, currants, cucumbers, corn, celery, cabbage, cherries, carrots, cauliflower, dates, endive, eggplants, figs, gooseberries, grapefruit, grapes, huckleberries, Indian corn, jalapenos, jicama, kumquat, kiwis, kohlrabi, lemons, leeks, lettuce, limes, melons, mangos, nectarines, okra, oranges, onions, pineapples, peaches, pears, papayas, persimmon, pomegranates, plums, parsnips, potatoes, peas, peppers, pumpkin, quince, raspberries, radishes, rutabagas, rhubarb, radicchio, swiss chard, spinach, star fruit, strawberries, tangerines, turnips, tomatoes, ugli fruit, vegetable marrow, watermelon, watercress, xigua, yams, zucchini



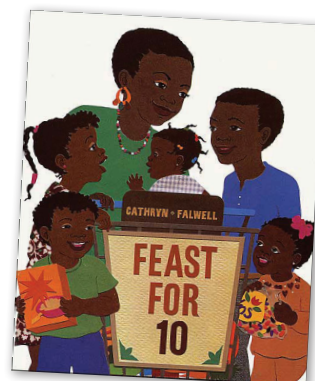
An alphabet board book full of fruits and vegetables from A to Z.

### FEAST FOR 10

By: Cathryn Falwell

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** pumpkins, green beans, leafy greens, tomatoes, potatoes, carrots

Numbers from one to ten are used to tell how members of a family shop and work together to prepare a meal.







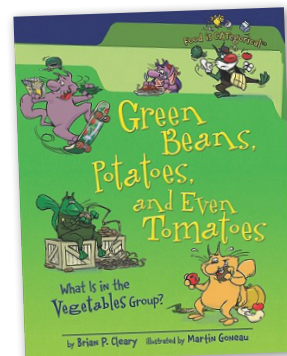
## BOOK LIST

### GREEN BEANS, POTATOES, AND EVEN TOMATOES: WHAT IS IN THE VEGETABLES GROUP?

By: Brian P. Cleary, Illustrator: Martin Goneau

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** spinach, sweet potatoes, carrots, bell peppers, brussel sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, chard, turnips, collard greens, tomatoes, eggplant, beans, corn, potatoes, squash, spinach, bok choy, potatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, celery

A fun rhyming book about which foods are considered vegetables, and why they are tasty and nutritious to eat.

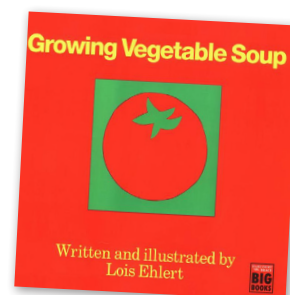


### GROWING VEGETABLE SOUP

By Lois Ehlert

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** green beans, peas, corn, zucchini, carrots, peppers, cabbage, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, broccoli

A book about growing vegetable soup from seed to bowl. Bright and colorful pictures and a short, easy-to-read story. Make sure to point out the potatoes in the story.

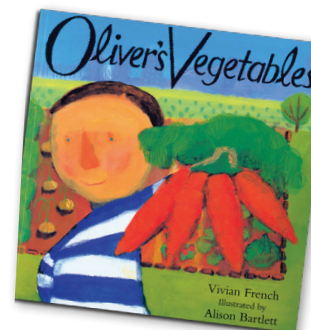


### OLIVER'S VEGETABLES

By: Vivian French, Illustrator: Alison Bartlett

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** carrots, spinach, rhubarb, cabbage, beets, peas, potatoes

Oliver is a little British boy who loves eating chips. When he visits his Grandfather, who has a large garden, Oliver is told he can look in the garden for potatoes, but he must eat whatever he finds! Throughout the week, Oliver tries new foods, from carrots to rhubarb to beets, and loves everything he tastes.

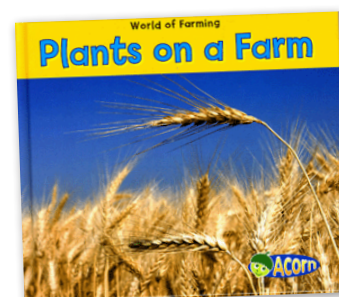


### PLANTS ON A FARM

By: Nancy Dickmann

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** pumpkin, green beans, cabbages, potatoes, carrots, strawberries, apples

Learn about the types of plants that are grown on the farm throughout the year.





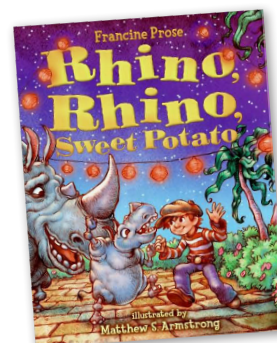
## BOOK LIST

### RHINO, RHINO, SWEET POTATO

By: Francine Prose, Illustrator: Matthew Armstrong

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** sweet potatoes

This is a story about a village named “Sweet Potato.” It got its name because the town grows and eats sweet potatoes. When Rhinos come to town looking for sweet potatoes, it takes a boy named Roy to get the villagers and rhinos to live happily ever after.



### THE GIGANTIC SWEET POTATO

By: Dianne De Las Casas

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** sweet potatoes

Ma Farmer plants a sweet potato so she can make sweet potato pie. But the sweet potato grows so big it takes everyone on the farm to help harvest it. Lily Mouse saves the day.

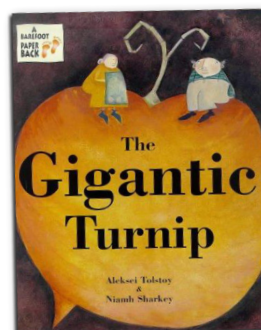


### THE GIGANTIC TURNIP

By: Aleksei Tolstoy & Niamh Sharkey

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** turnips, peas, carrots, potatoes, beans

An old man and woman plant a vegetable garden. Once they harvest the vegetables, one gigantic turnip remains. It takes the old man, the old woman, all of the farm animals, and finally, a tiny, hungry mouse, to pull the vegetable out. That night, it's turnip stew for dinner!

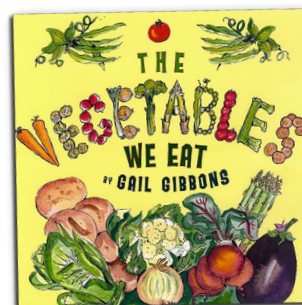


### THE VEGETABLES WE EAT

By: Gail Gibbons

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** lettuce, cabbage, spinach, brussel sprouts, onion, scallions, leeks, cauliflower, artichoke, broccoli, beets, parsnips, carrots, radishes, rutabaga, turnips, potatoes, celery, asparagus, rhubarb, tomatoes, eggplant, cucumbers, hot peppers, yellow squash, winter squash, sweet peppers, zucchini, green beans, peas, corn, soybeans

A fun and informative book all about vegetables, how they are grown, and which parts we eat. A great book to show kids the difference between leaf vegetables, bulbs, flower buds, and more. Different sections of the book could be read to highlight different themes: how vegetables grow, what parts of vegetables we eat, how to grow your own vegetable garden, etc.





## BOOK LIST

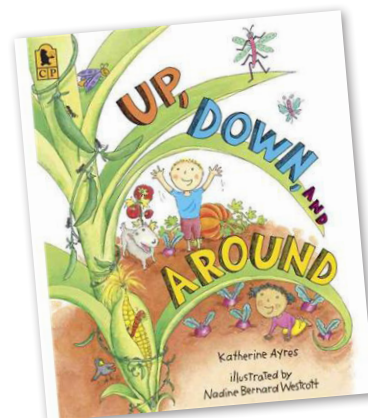
### UP, DOWN AND AROUND

By: Katherine Ayres, Illustrator: Nadine Bernard Westcott

Age: 2 & up

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** beets, pumpkins, broccoli, tomatoes, corn, green beans, cucumbers, peppers, potatoes, okra, onion, carrots

This fun, rhyming story tells the tale of how vegetables grow (broccoli grows up/beets grow down/green beans climb around and around). Children will love the bright, realistic illustrations, and the lilting rhymes.



### VEGETABLES

By: Sara Anderson

Age: 2 & up

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** celery, rhubarb, cucumbers, beans, potatoes, tomatoes, artichoke, turnips, carrots, peas, onion, eggplant, pumpkins, asparagus, lettuce, zucchini, beets, broccoli, spinach, corn, green beans, radishes, sweet potatoes, cauliflower, cabbage

Book features rhyming text and illustrations of brightly colored vegetables.



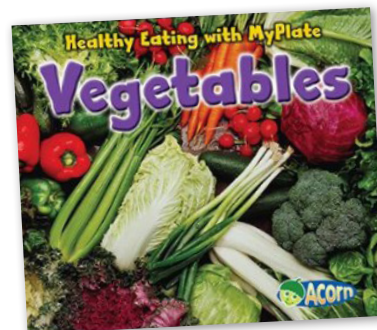
### VEGETABLES

By: Nancy Dickmann

Age: 4 & up

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** carrots, peas, onion, green beans, beets, spinach, sweet potatoes,

What vegetables are and how they help us.







## MORE IDEAS

### “P” IS FOR POTATO

Talk with children about how potato starts with the letter “P.” Ask children to come up with other words that start with “P,” and record their ideas on a large piece of butcher paper or construction paper. Hang the chart in the classroom for the month.



### TASTE AND TELL

Gather children in circle time and offer tastes of cooked sweet potato and cooked potato. Ask questions like: What does sweet potato taste like? What does the potato taste like? How do they taste the same or different? Do the children like the taste? Record children’s responses on chart paper to be hung in the classroom.

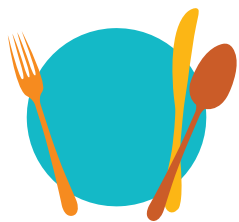
### PAPER BAG GUESSING GAME OR SURPRISE BOX

Place a sweet potato and a potato in a large paper or other bag. Invite children to reach their hands in the bag and describe the feel and shape of the sweet potato. Ask children to guess which is the potato and which is the sweet potato. Have children pull out one at a time to see. When the vegetables are out of the bag, ask children to describe their size, shape, and color. Alternatively, use a cardboard box for this activity (or a small shoebox). Cut out a hole large enough to fit small and big arms through.



### PICTURE CARDS

The Harvest for Healthy Kids picture cards can be used any time during the month in which the fruit/vegetable is featured. Picture cards come in three categories: Fruit and Veggie Photo Cards, How Does It Grow? (botanical illustrations of fruit and vegetables), and Same but Different (vegetables/fruits in different colors, or different varieties of a vegetable/fruit). Find ideas for how to use these cards in the Harvest for Healthy Kids Teacher Bites, and on the back of each picture card.



# Meal Time

Meal time is a great time to talk about fruits and vegetables, especially when a Harvest for Healthy Kids fruit or vegetable is being served! Use meal time to review something the children learned (e.g. that squash grows on a vine). You can also use hand stamps during meal time to congratulate children who “tried something new today!”

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## MEAL TIME IDEAS

### PLEASE PASS THE VEGGIES!

Children may be more likely to try new fruits and vegetables if they can touch and see the fruit or vegetable before it is cooked. When sweet potatoes and/or potatoes are served, try to have a few raw, whole sweet potatoes and potatoes on hand to pass around the tables. Talk with children about how whole sweet potatoes/potatoes like these were cut up/mashed/roasted by the cooks, so that children and teachers can have delicious, healthy food to eat!



### TABLE TALK

When children are trying sweet potatoes and potatoes during meal time, ask them questions, like:

- What do they taste like? Are they soft? Crunchy? Sweet? Salty?
- Does anyone have a garden? What do you grow in your garden?
- Has anyone tried to grow a sweet potato? What about a potato plant? (Later in the month, you can try a sweet potato growing activity in the classroom.)
- How do sweet potatoes and potatoes grow? (They grow underground.)
- What part of a plant are sweet potatoes and potatoes? (The roots.)

### “P” IS FOR POTATO

Talk with children about how potato starts with the letter “P.” Ask children to come up with other words that start with “P” as you eat together.





# Activity Time

Activity Time (e.g. “free choice” in Head Start centers, or full group activities) is a perfect time to introduce more activities like cooking projects and sensory explorations of fruits and vegetables.

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## SENSORY ACTIVITY

### One Potato, Two Potato, Sweet Potato, Plain Potato

#### OBJECTIVES:

1. Children describe the feel, smell, taste, and color of sweet potatoes and potatoes.
2. Children compare sweet potatoes to regular potatoes.

#### WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

A few sweet potatoes and a few potatoes, some cooked and some raw (whole)

Spoons and forks

Peeler

Medium pot for boiling potatoes

Stove or hot plate

Lemon juice or vinegar (for putting in water and soaking sweet potatoes to keep them from browning)

Chart paper, markers

#### WHAT YOU MIGHT DO:

- Boil or roast a couple of sweet potatoes and potatoes.
- Introduce sweet potatoes and potatoes to the children. Ask them to compare the sweet potatoes and potatoes. How are they the same? How are they different? Do they have different shapes? Are they different colors? How do they compare when you cut them open?
- Offer children tastes of cooked sweet potato and cooked potato. Have children compare the textures and flavors.
- Give children spoons and forks to explore the texture of cooked sweet potatoes and cooked potatoes, if desired. Children can mash potatoes, spoon potatoes out of skins, rake potatoes with a fork.
- Make a chart comparing sweet potatoes with potatoes.
- Given children a hand stamp for exploring a new vegetable!







# ★ COOKING ACTIVITY AND TASTING

## Sweet Potato Mash

### OBJECTIVES:

1. Children participate in cooking activity and learn how to make sweet potato mash.
2. Children learn some different ways that sweet potatoes are eaten (mashed, roasted, in soup, in pie).
3. Children taste sweet potatoes plain and mashed.

### WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

Ingredients for recipe **(next page)**

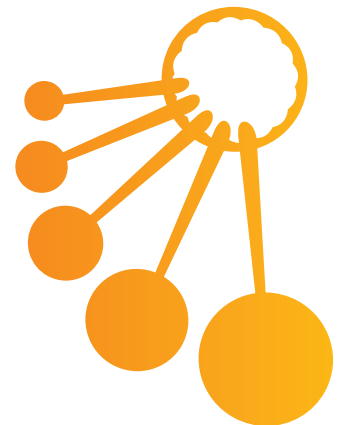
A little lemon juice or vinegar for water bath to soak peeled potatoes in and prevent browning

Cooking tools: medium-large pot for boiling sweet potatoes; cutting board; knife; vegetable peeler; fork, whisk or potato masher; small bowls for children to mash sweet potatoes in and/or large bowl for mashing

Small bowls or cups for tasting

### WHAT YOU MIGHT DO:

- Children wash their hands and sit or stand around the activity table. Announce, “Today we are going to make a recipe called Sweet Potato Mash.” Ask if anyone has tasted mashed potatoes before. What about mashed sweet potatoes? Has anyone tried sweet potatoes plain? What do they taste like?
- Introduce each ingredient as you place it on the activity table.
- Children can help to peel sweet potatoes.
- Children can take turns mashing the sweet potato in the bowl. Alternatively, divide sweet potato chunks into smaller bowls, so that children can mash a little bit of sweet potato on their own. Offer tastes of plain sweet potato to children, making sure they wash their hands again before continuing with the cooking activity.
- Children can help add salt and pepper to the sweet potatoes (once amounts are measured). They won’t need much seasoning!
- Children can all taste the sweet potato together. Do they like it? What does it taste like? Have children describe the color and texture.
- Give children a hand stamp for trying something new!
- Divide this activity over two days, if desired. On the first day, peel and cook the potatoes. Store overnight in the refrigerator. On the second day, reheat and mash the potatoes.
- As always, remember to keep children away from all sharp cutting utensils, electrical devices, and hot food and surfaces at all times.





# COOKING ACTIVITY AND TASTING

## Sweet Potato Mash

### SWEET POTATO MASH

Enough for tastes for children, about one-two tablespoon each

#### INGREDIENTS

2 lbs. sweet potatoes (4-6 medium)  
3/4 tsp. salt  
black pepper (to taste)

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Put a medium pot of water on to boil.
2. Wash sweet potatoes and peel.
3. Cut sweet potatoes in quarters.
4. When water boils, add sweet potatoes to pot.
5. Lower heat and simmer until potatoes are tender, about 20 minutes.
6. Add quartered sweet potatoes to a bowl and mash with a fork, whisk, or potato masher. If whisk, using the whisk with an up-and-down motion works best.
7. Add the butter or milk, if desired.
8. Season with salt and pepper.



# ★ HARVEST FOR HEALTHY KIDS RECIPE BOOK

Have children decorate and put together a recipe book throughout the year, including each month's cooking activity recipe!

## OBJECTIVES:

1. Children create a drawing to accompany the Sweet Potato Mash recipe, and use crayons, markers or paint to create art.
2. Children tell the class about their artwork.
3. Children will remember and connect experiences with sweet potatoes, and recall what they have learned during the month.

## WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

Printed copies of family versions of recipes for each child; recipe on ½ of page (8 ½ x 11)

Crayons, markers, paint, magazines with fruits and vegetables, crayons, scissors, glue

Sweet potatoes, for display

Family Recipe: Sweet Potato Mash (**page 17**)



## HARVEST FOR HEALTHY KIDS RECIPE BOOK:

Start this activity in the beginning of the year. Have each child decorate a cover for his or her fruit & veggie recipe book. Bind each child's book with enough pages for a recipe and picture for each month (8 months). Have children take the recipe book home with the welcome newsletter. Then, each month, using the recipe decorating activity to add recipes to the books! Children can take home their decorated recipe with a monthly newsletter, or just pinned to their bags or clothing!



## Family Recipe

### SWEET POTATO MASH

Serves 6

#### INGREDIENTS

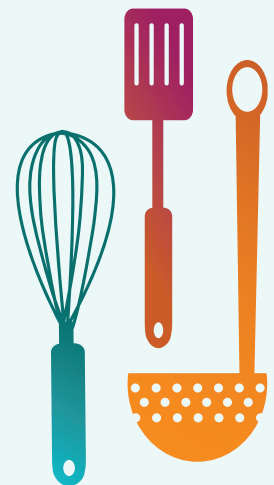
2 lbs. sweet potatoes (4-6 medium)  
3/4 tsp. salt  
black pepper (to taste)  
2 Tbs. butter or milk (optional)

#### DIRECTIONS

Put a medium pot of water on to boil. Scrub sweet potatoes and peel.\* Cut sweet potatoes in quarters. When water boils, add sweet potatoes to pot. Lower heat, and simmer sweet potatoes until tender (about 20 minutes).

Mash sweet potatoes with a fork. Using a metal whisk with an up-and-down motion also works well. Add the butter or milk, if desired. Season with salt and pepper. Enjoy!

\*Note: When sweet potatoes are exposed to air, they begin to brown. To keep raw sweet potatoes from browning, soak them in water with a little lemon juice or vinegar.





## ★ CREATIVE ARTS

### Watch our Garden Grow

#### OBJECTIVES:

1. Children learn that we can grow sweet potatoes in a garden.
2. Children review how sweet potatoes grow.
3. Children make their own sweet potato to display in the classroom “garden.”

#### WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

Small paper plates

Colored paper, yarn, paint, or other art supplies

Scissors

Glue



#### WHAT YOU MIGHT DO:

- Make a sweet potato using colored paper. Cut out a sweet potato shape and past green “leaves.”
- Prepare paper sweet potatoes and leaves for children.
- Tell children: we can grow sweet potatoes in a garden. Ask children if anyone has ever grown sweet potatoes in a garden.
- Ask children to remember how sweet potatoes grow (the potato grows under the ground; the leaves grow above the ground).
- Show children an example paper sweet potato and tell children today we will be making sweet potatoes for our “class garden.”
- Provide children with pre-cut paper “sweet potatoes,” “leaves,” and glue.
- Invite children to make their own sweet potato for the “class garden”
- Designate a space on a wall in the classroom for the “class garden.” Add to the wall each month with children’s colorful creations of the featured fruits and vegetables in the Harvest for Healthy Kids program.





# ★ PLANTING ACTIVITY

## Growing Sweet Potatoes

### OBJECTIVES:

1. Children are able to describe how a sweet potato grows from a slip into a plant.
2. Children describe resources needed to grow sweet potatoes.
3. Children help to start sweet potato slips.

### WHAT YOU MIGHT NEED:

Fresh sweet potatoes, unwashed

Sharp knife

Wooden craft sticks or toothpicks (three-four per sweet potato)

Clear glasses or narrow-mouthed or wide-mouthed quart size jars

(make sure the jars are large enough for the sweet potatoes to be suspended inside)



### WHAT YOU MIGHT DO:

#### PART 1: HOW DO SWEET POTATOES GROW?

1. Gather the children in circle time to learn about how sweet potatoes grow. Pass around sweet potatoes for the children to feel and smell.
2. Show children a photo of a sprouting sweet potato, such as the one to the right. Explain that sweet potatoes grow from slips. Point to the green sprouts in the photo: these are the slips.
3. Explain that people plant slips in rows of soil. Sweet potatoes grow under the soil, while their leaves grow on top of the soil. Can the children think of other plants that grow this way? (e.g. beets, carrots, potatoes).
4. Explain that water and sun help the plant to grow healthy and strong.
5. Explain that today the children will help start sweet potato slips in glasses/jars. Explain that the sweet potatoes will grow in the jars the way they would outside in the soil. We can watch them sprout and grow!

#### PART 2: SPROUTING A SWEET POTATO

1. Depending on how many sweet potatoes you have, give each child a sweet potato, or divide children into groups to work with a teacher or classroom aid and one sweet potato.
2. If using wooden craft sticks, teachers should make three ½ inch horizontal slits evenly spaced around the middle of the potato.
3. Help the children push the wooden craft sticks into each slit (at least ½ inch apart). Or, help the children push three to four toothpicks into the sweet potato, forming a circle around the middle of the potato.
4. With children, put sweet potatoes in jars. Toothpicks or wooden sticks should hold the top half of the sweet potato out of the jar.
5. Help the children fill the glass or jar with enough water to almost cover the bottom half of the sweet potato.
6. Place the jars in a warm location. A sunny windowsill is a good spot.
7. Watch over the next two to three weeks as the potato begins to grow roots at the bottom, and then leaves at the top of the potato. Refill the glasses/jars with water every few days.
8. After a couple of months, plant the sweet potato 3-4 inches deep in a pot or hanging pot filled with potting soil. Keep soil moist, and train the vines as desired.

\* Lesson adapted from "Sweet Potato Hill" in *Grow it, Try it, Like It*, USDA, September, 2009

Image from <http://wondertime.go.com/create-and-play/article/sweet-potato-experiment.html>



# Fast and Fun

Beyond circle time, meal time, and activity time, there are other simple ways to highlight the Harvest for Healthy Kids program, and teach children about fruits and vegetables. Take a look at the ideas below for easy ways to have fun with Harvest for Healthy Kids throughout the day.

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## FAST AND FUN

### PUPPETS

If you have puppets in the classroom, bring them into your Harvest for Healthy Kids activities! Try having a puppet introduce the featured fruit or vegetable at the beginning of the month. Puppets might also be used to introduce ingredients for a cooking activity, or during other activities.

### HAND STAMPS

Use your favorite hand stamps or stickers to acknowledge children participation in Harvest for Healthy Kids activities (e.g. cooking, sensory exploration, planting, reading) throughout the month. .

### DISCOVERY TABLE

Use the “discovery table” or another area of the classroom to explore different activities on a garden. Put out soil and various garden tools, such as rakes, hoes, and small shovels and spades. Include seeds and a small watering can. Allow children to explore the soil and use the tools, while practicing different jobs on a garden. This can be a great activity for children if you plan to have (or already have) a school garden at your center.

### TASTING CHART

Create a chart with children’s names on the left side in rows and the featured fruit and vegetable names on the top in columns. Each month, give children a stamp or sticker in the fruit/vegetable box next to their name if they tasted the fruit or vegetable anytime during the month. Hang the tasting chart in the classroom.



## **ABOUT HARVEST FOR HEALTHY KIDS**

Harvest for Healthy Kids is a nutrition program designed to introduce children in early care and education settings to a wide variety of locally grown fruits and vegetables through their meals and snacks and classroom activities. Monthly family engagement activities support parents in promoting healthy eating habits at home. Harvest for Healthy Kids is a partnership between Mt. Hood Community College Head Start and Early Head Start and the School of Community Health at Portland State University.