

Leaf Lesson

Grade Level: Adaptable for 2-5
Total Lesson Time: 45 minutes



Lesson Overview

This lesson celebrates leaves as healthy food for us and for their ability to make food for plants through photosynthesis. Students list leaves we eat, then taste and compare four different leaves. A short skit portrays photosynthesis occurring in the leaf of a plant.

Objectives

Students will:

1. Know that plants make their own food through photosynthesis (Agriscience/Production D.4.1)
2. Identify a wide variety of leaves that people eat as food (W.I.N.D; Ecology/Environment E.4.1; Health A.4.3)
3. Understand basic plant anatomy and process development (Agriscience/Production D.4.1)

Preparation

1. Purchase food supplies
2. Clean leaves (if necessary) and slice cucumber the morning of the lesson
3. Collect materials for the “Chef Chlorophyll” skit

Procedure

Review

Review previous lesson by asking students to share what they remember. Ask them what roots and stems do for plants. And what did the celery and food coloring experiment show?

Introduction

Introduce this leaf lesson by telling students that they will learn about another plant part that helps make plants healthy for us to eat. Ask students to guess which part they will learn about. Then have students name all the edible leaves they can think of, while you list them on the board.

Materials

Food

4 different kinds of leaves for tasting (examples: lettuces, mustard greens, arugula, spinach, bok choy, cabbage, parsley, mint, cilantro.

Cucumber

Veggie Dip / Salad Dressing

Supplies

Plates

Napkins

Props for “Chef

Chlorophyll” skit (pot, spoon, chef hat)

Chef hat

Soup pot

Spoon

Pictures of sun, water, and air (attached)

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REAP Food Group:
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Procedure (cont.)

Taste Test

In this activity students taste four different leaves, compare, and vote on their favorite. Serve the leaves with a couple slices of cucumber and some healthy veggie dip or salad dressing. Explain that the cucumber is to be used as a “palate cleanser,” to clean the taste of one leaf out the mouth before trying the next.

Hand out the leaves one at a time so everyone tastes them together. Ask students if they can identify the leaf before tasting. While tasting, ask students to describe what they taste and record the descriptive words on the board. Students should be encouraged to be specific with their descriptions, using words like bitter, peppery, or sweet. This is a good opportunity to incorporate vocabulary words or language arts skills, such as creating similes to describe the flavor of the leaves.

When tasting is done, ask students to vote for their favorite leaf. You may choose to record and graph the results.

“Chef Chlorophyll” Theatre

This short skit is intended to introduce students to photosynthesis. The primary objective is to teach students that plants make food for themselves, which helps make plants healthy for us to eat. We introduced this activity by recalling that roots and stems pull nutrients up from the soil, but leaves also do something very special by making food through photosynthesis. One teacher played “Chef Chlorophyll” and another adult helped ask questions and hand out ingredients.

This short skit takes place inside a leaf, where “Chef Chlorophyll” sits with his pot and spoon, mixing up food for the plant. Chef Chlorophyll introduces himself and tells students what he is doing. He takes a taste from his pot and says, “It tastes okay, but it needs a few ingredients.” Chef Chlorophyll’s helper asks students what ingredients the chef needs. These ingredients are things that plants need to live and grow. (Sun, water, and air)

When a student answers with one of the correct ingredients give them one of the pictures and have them drop it in the chef’s pot. Chef Chlorophyll stirs it in and tastes again. A couple more ingredients are needed. Repeat until all three ingredients are in the pot. Conclude with Chef Chlorophyll stating that the mixture tastes just right and that now the food is done.

Follow-up with a brief discussion about photosynthesis and chlorophyll. Ask students if people make food like plants do. We asked them to imagine that people could just make a piece of lasagna inside their arm. That’s a bit what its like for plants.

Photosynthesis Song

Sing along with “Photosynthesis” by “Solar” Steve Van Zandt of the Banana Slug String Band. Many great food and plant related songs, including “Photosynthesis” are available on CD and in songbooks from the Banana Slug String Band at www.bananaslugstringband.com.

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