

Eating from the Garden

One Bite Lessons: Easy and Edible

Overview

“One Bite Lessons” are edible activities that don’t require a kitchen or excessive preparation. They are fun and creative ways to sample plants right from the garden.

Harvesting food straight from the garden is a powerful act. For many kids the school garden is the only place they will experience eating “straight off the vine.” Students who harvest straight from the garden are often more adventurous and try food they might not sample otherwise. Use this time to explore the garden and show students what is good to harvest in the garden. Remember to follow safe hand and produce washing practices. If garden production is low consider supplementing the garden harvest with produce from the farmer’s market or store.

Logistics

Recommended Grade Level: Pre-K to 12

Season: Any

Location: Garden with edible plants

Time required: About 10-30 minutes

Suggested Materials

Depending on what you are harvesting you might consider

- Harvest baskets or bags
- Cutting board or plate
- Knife
- Cloth napkin or paper towels
- Hand shears or scissors
- Appropriate seasoning such as lemon or lime, hot sauce, dressings
- Store bought produce if needed

Supplies for hand and produce washing

- Spray bottles for rinsing veggies
- Colanders to set on top of buckets for rinsing veggies
- Hand sanitizer or wipes if there are no sinks for hand washing

Food Safety

Outdoor sink areas are very useful for any edible garden project. If possible, several faucets and multiple sinks will speed up hand and produce washing. Make this a priority as you are developing your garden plans.

However, you can enjoy safe, clean produce even without a sink, if you keep in mind a few simple but important steps and concepts:

- 1) Check that the water used in your garden is safe for drinking.
- 2) Veggies and fruits always need to be washed with *running* water, meaning that water needs to freely flow off of the surface of the produce to remove germs and contaminants.
- 3) Do not use soaps to wash produce.
- 4) For root crops with dirt on the surface such as carrots, you can first scrub and rub the produce in a bucket or sink of standing water to remove the visible dirt. *Then* complete the last produce wash under running water.
- 5) If you don't have a sink, the run-off from produce washing efforts should be collected or channeled or you'll quickly end up with weedy, muddy patches in your garden.
- 6) Handwashing needs to be under running water. Children should not share standing water for any step in handwashing.
- 7) Use biodegradable hand soap so that handwashing water can be collected and used in the garden.
- 8) Hand Sanitizer is an effective alternative if clean running water is not available.

The following are some suggestions for cleaning produce and hands when you don't have sinks.

Hand washing without a sink	Produce washing without a sink
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A large water dispenser with a spout set on a table or chair. One student holds the spout open while another student washes his/her hands. Place bucket or dishpan underneath to catch the run-off.● Wet hands with spray bottles. Rub, soap, and rinse with hose held over a bucket, a garden bed, or at the base of a fruit tree that needs water.● Hand Sanitizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Place a colander of produce on top of a bucket, rinse produce with hose letting water run off and collect in the bucket.● Use spray bottles to drench produce. Rub surface, then rinse with running water.● For berries, cherry tomatoes, peas, or edible flowers, use a fan sprayer attached to a hose to thoroughly rinse the produce on the vine before picking.

Activities

The following are examples of one bite lessons.

Bubblegum Kale: Sandwich a piece of spearmint inside kale. Chew and enjoy.
Invented by Samantha, age 4, Berkeley, CA.

Lettuce Buffet: Harvest several different kinds of lettuce, wash it, put a little bit of each kind on a plate. Sample all the various lettuces, without the salad mess.
Contributed by Chase Avenue Elementary, El Cajon, CA.

Flavored Water: Add crumpled mint leaves to your water bottles or glasses of water. Shake or stir, enjoy the minty goodness. Also try with other herbs or fruits. Sliced strawberries, cucumbers, lemon verbena leaves, citrus slices, or lemon balm leaves are all good options. *Contributed by CAFF's Central Coast Farm to School Program, Watsonville, CA.*

One Bite Salsa: Harvest a pepper and snip off some onion greens. Have kids harvest a couple of cherry tomatoes. Break pepper into pieces, tear up small pieces of onion greens. Eat cherry tomato, pepper piece, and a bit of onion in one bite.
Contributed by the Life Lab Garden Classroom, Santa Cruz, CA.

Flower Feast: Discuss which flowers in the garden are edible. Harvest a variety of edible flower and eat a mini bouquet or go on a floral walk sampling different flowers as you pass them. *Contributed by the Life Lab Garden Classroom, Santa Cruz, CA.*

Six Plant Part Burrito: As a group harvest edible roots, stems, leaves (large ones like roman lettuce), flowers, fruits, and seeds. Wash veggies. Use a cutting board or plate and cut plant parts up in small pieces (minus the large edible leaf part). Have kids fill their leaf up with samples of each plant part. Roll up your "burrito" and munch on down or sample each part separately. Also known as Six Plant Part Tacos, Finger Salads, and many other creative names. *Contributed by the Life Lab Garden Classroom, Santa Cruz, CA.*

A Taste of Nectar: Use a variety of edible flowers in the garden. Have a discussion about flowers, nectar and pollinators. Have the children observe the insect activity in the garden and ask questions. Then introduce plants with edible flowers. Borage works great. Give each child a borage flower. Have them gently remove the pistil of the flower and lick the nectar from the receptacle. Also try plants like cilantro and radishes that have bolted. With cilantro flowers, have the children "dab" the flower on their tongue and see who can taste the nectar! And don't forget, all these flowers can be eaten too! *Contributed by St. Cornelius School, Long Beach, CA.*

Sour Face: Harvest lemons, rhubarb stems (leaves are toxic to eat), or other sour tasting plants. Eat and watch the sour faces show up. *Contributed by the Life Lab Garden Classroom, Santa Cruz, CA*

Pick a Salad Day: Take the class out to the garden with a spray bottle filled with water. Each student team has a plate and napkins. They harvest their vegetables, wash them with the water bottle and sit down for a salad party. They will try things they have never eaten before just because they grew it and picked it. Swiss Chard is my favorite. *Contributed by Bethune Academy.*

Food for Thought

- Can you see doing these lessons with your students?
- How might you modify it to work in your garden?
- How might you connect these activities to nutrition education?
- What other ways have you practiced safe food handling and hand washing in the garden?