

What are Heritage Plants?

(Classroom or garden– based activity)

Provided by: Allison Candy, Columbia Valley Botanical Garden

Sources:

Adapted from: *How Groundhog's Garden Grew* by Lyn Cherry, Blue Sky Press 2003.

Curriculum connections:

Science and Language Arts and a bit of math (Junior Level, could be adapted for younger or older groups)

Basic Description:

Students listen to a story, plant seeds, learn about heritage seeds, reading seed package for plant needs and sizes, plant seeds.

Materials:

- Trays
- Soil
- watering sprayers
- marking sticks
- Seeds for a variety of plants grown in local vegetable gardens
- Empty seed packages used for collecting and recording seed information

Time Allotment:

Introductions - 10 minutes

Story - 15 minutes

Seed packages and heritage seeds - 15 minutes

Planting - 20-minutes

Procedure

- Read aloud story “How Groundhog’s Garden Grew” which covers many activities of planting, growing and harvesting a vegetable garden.
- Discuss the story.
- Hand out one seed package of a variety of plants grow in a local garden per pair of students and have them mark how tall and wide the plant will be beside their desks with their ruler.
- Show seed packages used for collecting and recording information about the plant.
- Discuss the use of heritage seeds in the botanical garden – a dedication to preserving a broad plant gene pool, flavours, colours, shapes , and climatic adaptations of historically grown varieties.
- Refer back to the apple example from “We are where and what we eat” activity.

- Plant select seeds from previous weeks sprouting as well as seeds from packages appropriate for transplanting to the garden.
- Plant both heritage and regular varieties.
- Predict results.
- Record growth and problems encountered over the growing season.
- If you are able to follow up with the same group, discuss how results differed from the original predictions.

Extensions

- Students can brainstorm different experiments to do with the plants such as restricted water, light or soil types. Last year beans grown in a cupboard yielded some dramatic results versus those grown under grow lights.
- Older students could take the exercise a step further with the seed packages by filling in a garden map with a plan for planting 3 or 4 seeds of plants of different needs and sizes. Map could have shady and sunny, wet and dry areas to add complexity to the planning process. An interesting math challenge to have a scale map and their predictions of the size of the fully grown plants.

