



Sweet Potatoes in the Classroom

Introduction

Guess the Vegetable

Tell students you have something to eat inside a brown paper bag. Without using their eyes, ask children to reach inside the paper bag and use their sense of touch to explore the object inside. Give each child a chance to feel the “mystery object” in one of the bags. (Having multiple bags and a helper makes this part of the lesson go more smoothly and faster.) Ask the children to describe how the object feels. Is it hard or soft? Smooth or bumpy? Do they have any guesses about what it might be?

If students aren't able to guess give them an opportunity to guess by sight. Inform students if they didn't guess that the object is a sweet potato.

Ask students:

1. Do you eat sweet potatoes at home?
2. How are they cooked (boiled, sauteed, roasted)
3. How are they prepared? (sweet potato fries, mashed sweet potatoes, sweet potato burgers, sweet potato pie, etc.) If students are not familiar, tell them they will get to try them on their school menu.
4. How do sweet potatoes grow (possible answers include in soil, with water and sunlight, roots underground, etc.)

Adapted from Growing Minds, a program of Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project.

True or False

Read statements aloud and ask students to stand if they are true and stay sitting if they are false.

1. Illinois produces more sweet potatoes than any other state in the United States. (False. North Carolina is number one. Sweet potatoes like warm climates.)
2. Sweet potatoes can be white, orange, red, and purple. (True. The color of skin and flesh of a sweet potato will depend upon its variety.)
3. The sweet potato is not a potato. (True. The sweet potato and potato are not in the same family. Potatoes are in the nightshade family with eggplant, peppers, and

tomatoes. Sweet potatoes are in the morning glory family with more than 1,000 flowers called morning glories)

4. People only eat the root of the sweet potato plant. (False. The leaves of the sweet potato plant are edible.)

Adapted from New Hampshire Harvest of the Month lessons.

Optional: Present a picture of a sweet potato plant and point out the main parts (stem, leaves, root, flowers): <https://www.thinglink.com/scene/719176179692601345> or <https://ncsweetpotatoes.com/sweet-potatoes-101/how-to-grow-sweet-potatoes/>

Bonus Activity

Student Sleuths

Students investigate the following questions:

1. What makes the flesh of a sweet potato so orange?
2. What health functions does Vitamin A provide for our bodies? Vitamin C? Vitamin B6? Iron?
3. What is the difference between a tuber and a root?
4. How are sweet potatoes similar to and different from yams? (Include nutrition content, texture, skin and flesh colors, and geographic regions where each are found).

Lesson Ideas

All grades

https://www.nhharvestofthemonth.org/uploads/8/7/7/2/87724720/finalhom_nov_sweet_potatoes_lesson.pdf

<https://ncsweetpotatoes.com/curriculum/>

<https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/8c45584d-09b0-45ed-bb6e-d046b7ba0beb/george-washington-carver-and-the-sweet-potato-project-learning-garden/>

Pre-K

<https://www.pre-kpages.com/science-for-kids-observing-plant-growth-in-sweet-potatoes/>

Replace duck, duck, goose with potato, potato, sweet potato.

Elementary and Middle

<https://agclassroom.org/teacher/matrix/resources.cfm?rid=1044>

