

HARVEST of the MONTH in the CLASSROOM



HERBS

HISTORY

Many different types of culinary and medicinal herbs can be grown in Massachusetts. Basil is native to India and is commonly used in Laotian, Mediterranean (especially Italian), Thai, and Vietnamese cooking. Mint's most popular species are peppermint and spearmint, due to their intensely aromatic oils. The herb is native to the Mediterranean and grows as a perennial in Massachusetts. Oregano is native to northern Europe and is a prominent ingredient in Mediterranean and French cuisine.

FUN FACTS

Basil was part of the embalming process in ancient Egypt.

In the past, rosemary was used to kill germs. People burned rosemary in sick people's rooms.

The word "herb" comes from the Latin word herba, meaning grass, green stalks, or blades.

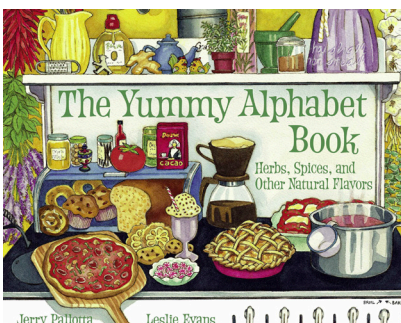
Chives have an insect repelling property that can be utilized in a garden to control pests.

BOOK RECOMENDATIONS



Cox, Jeff. The Cook's Herb Garden. 2010.

From garden to table, this book will guide you through planting, growing, harvesting, and cooking herbs. Included is a visual index of 120 culinary herbs and more than 30 delicious recipes to make with them. Once you have harvested your herbs, learn the different ways you can store them for future meals, such as, freezing or drying them.



Pallotta, Jerry. The Yummy Alphabet Book. 1994.

Welcome to a delectable alphabet adventure. While on your way to "Z is for Zatar," relish the savory Mustard, the aromatic Spearmint, and the spicy Wasabi. You'll also want to try the Kola, the Vanilla, and especially the Xocoatl! Mouth-watering illustrations and informative, child-appealing text makes this a delicious treat for hungry readers.



HERBS

OBJECTIVES

Each student will research one herb to add to a class field guide.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What are some of the most common herbs in New England?
What are the internal and external structures of plants?
How are herbs used for cooking or medicine?
Discover the history of specific herbs.

MA STATE FRAMEWORK(S)

- 4-LS3-1

MATERIALS NEEDED

Computers (for research) and/or handouts

PROCEDURE

Introduction

Ask students if they know the names of any herbs. Pass around a spring of lavender or basil or mint for students to smell. What do they notice?

Discussion

What is an herb?

An herb is defined as a non-woody, seed bearing plant, or part of a plant that is used for food, medicine or flavoring. When we use a plant for its flavors, we call it a, "culinary herb," and when we use it for its healing qualities, we call it a, "medicinal herb," but there is a lot of overlap, and our favorite herbs for flavor may also help our bodies in different ways.

What part of the plant do we use?

Often we use the leaves of herbs, but seeds, and roots often have culinary and medicinal uses too. Explain and show the different parts of an herb, either using fresh herbs or images.

How is an herb different from a spice?

Herbs and spices both come from plants but herbs are the fresh part of the plant while spice is the dried root, dried stalk, seed or dried fruit of the plant and is almost always dried not fresh.

HERBS: OBSERVATION

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PROCEDURE

Activity

Assign each student a research project on a specific plant. They should explore and diagram both the structure of the plant and the physical properties, as well as medicinal or culinary uses. Have them create a page to your classroom's field guide. Photocopies from *Walking the World In Wonder* can be used for their resources, and this project could involve computer research.

EXTENSIONS AND VARIATIONS

Take an Herb Walk!

In the spring or summer, take a walk outside the classroom to identify some wild herbs that grow outside. Invite a local herbalist to come share their knowledge with the class. [Walking the World in Wonder](#) is a great kid (and adult) friendly herb resource book with photos, descriptions of uses, and recipes. You could bring this along on a walk, or bring your favorite field guide.

Plan Your Herb Garden

What culinary and medicinal herbs will you plant in your herb garden? Map out your herb garden on graph paper, making it 24 square feet, and write a paragraph description of your garden. Did you put culinary herbs and medicinal tea herbs? How do you plan to use the plants? What parts of the plants will you be using?

Start Herb Seeds in the Classroom

Is there access to a sunny window, or grow lights in the classroom? Start seeds with students for the school garden, or for students to take home, and discuss care for the seeds and mature plants.