

Lesson 11

Celebrate the Sleuths' Mystery Dinner



Lesson Summary



Overview

The garden detectives celebrate their hard work in the garden! Students harvest the ripe fruits and vegetables and help prepare a gala dinner from the garden for their families and schoolmates.

Depending upon the growing conditions of the local area and the growth cycle of the different fruits and vegetables, the plants may mature at different times. This lesson may be introduced at an earlier time, if the plants are maturing early. This lesson will need to be flexible depending on the maturation of the garden.



Key Message

You are a great garden detective! Share what you've learned with others.



Garden Connection

The garden detectives take a photograph (or create a drawing to scale) of their assigned fruit or vegetable in the garden each week and post it on the bulletin board. As they do so, they report to the rest of the class on how their plants are growing.

The children harvest their garden and use the fruits and vegetables at the Mystery Dinner. Parents and the rest of the school see pictures of the gardens and progress over the course of the unit, and have the option of touring the garden space. A tour could be led and designed by the students. For example, students may wish to light the garden area with jack-o-lanterns in the fall or create a scavenger hunt.



School Food Service Connection

Ask school food service to showcase at the Mystery Dinner how it has featured the fruits and vegetables grown in the garden in the cafeteria. Have students work with school food service to plan and prepare the menu. Find ideas in the *Recipes for Healthy Kids Cookbook* on the CD-ROM.



Home Connection

Parents will be invited to attend the Mystery Dinner and receive a copy of the class cookbook. Collaborate with your school's parent organization (PTA/PTO) to plan the event. It may be willing to help fund supplies and provide volunteers.



Community Connection

Consider inviting a mystery guest from the community to join in recognizing the students. This guest could be a chef, school board member, sports star, farmer, or community leader.



Media Connection

Invite local media to report on the Sleuths' Mystery Dinner and gardening efforts.

Main Lesson: Celebrate the Sleuths' Mystery Dinner

Standards Addressed

Science

Standard C, Life Science: *Develop an understanding of the characteristics of organisms, life cycle of organisms, and organisms and environments.*

Standard F, Science in Personal and Social Perspectives (Personal Health/Nutrition): *Develop an understanding of how various foods contribute to health.*

English/Language Arts

Standard 1, Writing: *Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.*

Vocabulary

Harvest: To pick the fruits and vegetables when they are ripe and ready to eat.

Ripe: Developed to the point of maturity where a plant is ready for harvest.

Sleuth: Another name for a detective.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Describe when fruits and vegetables are ready to harvest.
2. Prepare simple recipes using garden produce.
3. Describe gardening activities to family members.

Time Required

2 hours

- 60 minutes for harvest and journal reflection
- 60 minutes for Mystery Dinner

Materials

- Pictures of mature plants that are ready to be harvested (in Appendix D and on CD-ROM)
- Clean containers to hold harvested fruits and vegetables
- Depending on size of garden, additional fruits and vegetables may be needed to prepare a sufficient harvest feast for family members
- Variety of low-fat salad dressings and low-fat yogurt for dipping fruits
- Disposable plastic food preparation gloves, one pair per student
- Paper plates, napkins, and plastic cutlery in sufficient quantity, based on anticipated number of guests
- *Garden Detective Certificates* (in Appendix D and on CD-ROM)

Preparation

- Select date for Sleuths' Mystery Dinner in conjunction with cafeteria, if dinner will be held in the cafeteria. Discuss the date with the school principal and put the date on the school calendar (see Getting Started Guide).
- Share *Recipes for Healthy Kids Cookbook* from CD-ROM with school food service. Select a menu for the Sleuths' Mystery Dinner.
- Work with your PTA/PTO or parent group, school food service, or other sources to obtain funds for purchasing ingredients and supplies, including paper products.
- Announce Sleuths' Mystery Dinner to families by having students prepare an appropriately themed invitation.
- Post an invitation to the dinner in the cafeteria.

- Invite the principal to attend the Mystery Dinner and to hand out the *Garden Detective Certificate* to each student. You may also invite a mystery guest from the community, such as a school board member, chef, or local celebrity.
- Invite parent volunteers or Master Gardeners to assist students during harvesting.
- Print and laminate pictures of mature plants to guide harvesting.
- Print one copy of the *Garden Detective Certificate* for each student and personalize each one with the student's name, teacher's signature, and principal's signature.
- With school food service, prepare harvested fruits and vegetables by cleaning them and cutting them into bite-size pieces.
- Wash the surface of the desk or tables with hot, soapy water. Sanitize with a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water.

Instructional Process

STEP 1

Start the harvest lesson in the garden.

Explain to students that it has now been approximately 10 weeks since they planted their garden. It is time to harvest what they've grown, i.e., to pick the ripe fruits and vegetables.

Begin by passing around photographs of the garden plants at maturity so students can see what they look like. Then demonstrate to students how to harvest each plant, using the following guidelines (see Grow Sheets in Appendix C as well):

Beets

- Beets are ready to harvest when the root is 1 ½ inches in diameter.
- If a beet is not ready to harvest, pick some of the young greens. They can be used in salads. Be sure to leave 2 to 3 leaves so the plant will continue to grow.

Carrots

- Carrots are ready to harvest when the orange top starts to become visible or when the root is about ½ inch in diameter.

Swiss Chard

- Do not pull out the plant by the root.
- Pick individual leaves to keep the plant in place and producing.
- Leave several leaves for the plant to keep growing.

Lettuce

- Do not pull out the plant by the root.
- Pick individual leaves to keep the plant in place and producing.
- Leave several leaves for the plant to keep growing.

Spinach

- Harvest spinach by cutting the entire plant off at soil level when the outer leaves are 6- to 8-inches long.

It is unlikely that strawberries and raspberries/blackberries will bear fruit in the first year they are planted because these plants require 2 or more years to become fruit-bearing.

Strawberries

- Harvest strawberries when the berry is red and fragrant.
- Grasp the stem just above the berry between the forefinger and the thumbnail and pull with a slight twisting motion.

Raspberries/blackberries

- Raspberries are ripe when they have achieved their desired color (red, gold, etc.).
- Blackberries are ready to harvest when they are black and soft.
- Gently grasp the berry with your fingers and thumb, and tug gently.

STEP 2 Harvest the ripe fruits and vegetables.

Using parent or other volunteers to help, harvest the fruits and vegetables that are ripe. First, have students wash hands thoroughly and put on their garden T-shirts or smocks. Give each garden detective group the photograph of their fruit or vegetable at maturity so that they can recognize which plants are ready to harvest. Encourage the students and volunteers to handle the ripe fruits and vegetables with care. Place harvested produce in clean containers.

STEP 3 Prepare a simple salad with harvested fruits and vegetables.

Work with your school food service or PTA/PTO to obtain additional fruits and vegetables, if needed, to serve a salad featuring the fruits and vegetables from the garden. Have students wash hands, put on plastic gloves to ensure food safety, and then have them rinse fruits and vegetables under running water, tear or cut them into bite-size pieces, and assemble them in large salad bowls. Store the bowls in the cafeteria refrigerator.

You may also wish to ask the school food service to prepare a main course for the dinner or ask families to contribute a main dish for a class potluck with a vegetable salad and fruit dessert from the garden.

STEP 4 Have students write about their harvest experience in their *Garden Detective Journals*.

Using 3-hole-punch notebook paper, have the students write a reflection entry in their *Garden Detective Journals* about what they learned from their gardening experience, from planting to harvesting.

STEP 5 Prepare for the Sleuths' Mystery Dinner.

Clean all serving surfaces prior to the dinner. Have students and/or cafeteria staff set up the salads, salad dressings and dips, plates, napkins, and cutlery, on one serving table so that family members can help themselves. Allow room for the main course, as well.

STEP 6 At the Sleuths' Mystery Dinner, welcome families and special guests to the harvest celebration.

Explain that the class members have been garden detectives in training during this unit, learning to solve the mysteries of where fruits and vegetables come from and how they help us to achieve and maintain good health. Describe the fruits and vegetables that the class has been growing, and the activities that they have completed over the past several weeks (i.e., maintaining the garden, monitoring plant growth and weather conditions, researching fruits and vegetables and making fruit and vegetable PSAs, tasting fruits and vegetables, preparing simple recipes, tracking their fruit and vegetable intake at lunch, and preparing for today's celebration). Instruct students to share the contents of their *Garden Detective Journals* with their parents/caregivers.

Tell the students they are great garden detectives! They learned about gardening, where food comes from, and the importance of healthy eating habits with plenty of fruits and vegetables. And best of all... they shared their knowledge with their friends, their families, and with their community. They are truly great garden detectives and ambassadors for good health.

STEP 7 Have each small group present its fruit/vegetable PSAs (from Lesson 3).

STEP 8 Distribute class cookbooks. Instruct each student to give family members or guests his or her cookbook. Review the cookbook contents with today's guests.

STEP 9

Ask the principal to distribute the Garden Detective Certificate to each student and to say a few words about the importance of the garden to the school and its learning activities.

STEP 10

Celebrate the harvest. Thank the guests for attending the Sleuths' Mystery Dinner, and the students for all their hard work. Invite all guests and students to enjoy the dinner.