

TH Activity Plan – Plant Parts & Plant Parts Rap

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Adapted from Texas Cooperative Extension. (1999). *Junior Master Gardener Teacher/Leader Guide*.



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will learn about plant parts with tasting and rapping/singing activities.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Expand knowledge about edible plant parts

Physical: Cut, handle & taste produce; practice reading

Psychological/Emotional: Expand personal boundaries, comfort & confidence

Sensory: Evaluate what vegetable flavors are preferred

Social: Participate in group rapping reading lyrics

Materials

Variety of vegetables: radish,
broccoli, celery

Plates, napkins, knives,
Optional: Ranch dressing

Plant Parts Rap handout

Gloves, wipes



STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Determine if any participant has allergies, medication or swallowing issues that would prevent them from tasting the session's raw vegetables. Gather materials.
2. Facilitator begins session by laying out the vegetables that will be used & introducing the concept that what we eat includes different parts of plants: roots, stems, leaves, blossom, fruits & nuts. Safe food handling protocols should be covered.
3. After distributing plates, knives (if being used), napkins, gloves, or having participants do this, facilitator introduces one plant/vegetable at a time asking "What plant part of this vegetable do we eat?" Select a variety of vegetables that will include every type of plant part. These do not have to be presented in any order & mixing the order up can be fun. Presenting a whole plant vs. the part that is eaten is recommended to teach where food comes from.
4. Tasting the vegetables begins, one at a time. If cost allows, participants each get the vegetable, to be cut (using non-serrated knives), tasted & discussed. Use of a rating chart can expand the activity (taste, juiciness, firmness, crunch, color, smell) & include comparing & contrasting activity. Refer to THAD *Eating Plant Parts*.
5. Going through the lineup of vegetables, facilitator can summarize the activity by asking group "What vegetable did we eat the stem?" Additional questions like "What vegetable did you like best -show of hands? What vegetable was the crunchiest?"
6. Once mouths are empty... distribute the rap song *Plant Parts Rap*. The group or individuals rap the song, as a multi-sensory way of reinforcing plant knowledge.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Populations that do **not** have swallowing, allergy or contraindications with medications will find this sensory-intense activity fun. Note that vegetable substitutions may be possible if there

are limited numbers of vegetable allergies or medicine conflicts. Combining plant knowledge with hands-on tasting activities reinforces the cognitive educational information and comparing/contrasting concepts that are important for some populations (developmentally delayed, elementary aged children, senior/dementia) while offering therapeutic elements like strengthening life skills – cutting/eating vegetables.

Nutritional goals of introducing and expanding produce consumption in diets for some participants that may have never tasted or chosen to taste some vegetables can address dietary challenges for people with diabetes, eating disorder, as well as immigrant/refugee and child/youth populations. This activity is particularly compelling if delivered in a community garden setting or correctional facility’s food garden with vegetables fresh (& washed) from the garden, and consumed by participants. People with food insecurity can also benefit from the TH activity.

Adaptations for older, more experienced adults can focus on discussion of nutritional benefits and preparations for cooking the vegetables vs. “name that plant part game” and rap song. When this TH activity was delivered with seniors, some with dementia, the rap song, particularly the facilitator’s awkward version of rapping brought lots of laughter, with participants “assisting” by tapping the rhythm as a helpful prompt (and role reversal).

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Prior determination of food allergies, swallowing issues, and medication-food interactions should be done. Knives may be appropriately used by some populations; other programs may choose to have facilitator use them or have pre-cut vegetables. Safe food handling protocols should be discussed and used.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: To encourage tasting of each vegetable, it is suggested that the raw samples be introduced, and only after all have been tasted, and towards the end of the tasting part, and as a way to increase vegetable consumption and reduce food wastage, ranch dressing can be offered.

Edible plant parts: **Roots**-carrot, turnip tops*, sweet potato*, beets; **Stems**-celery, asparagus, kohlrabi, radish, baboo shoots, potatoes*. **Leaves**-lettuce, spinach, cabbage, Tat soi, kale, other greens, microgreens, chives, basil, mint, parsley, cilantro, onions. **Flowers**-broccoli, cauliflower, nasturtium, artichoke*. **Fruits**-peppers, tomatoes, cucumber, yellow squash & squash blossoms, zucchini, avocado, eggplant*. **Seeds**-corn, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, sugar snap peas, wheat & rice seeds*, garbonzo beans*. *Some require cooking before eating.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

PLANT PARTS RAP	
“Plants are our friends, we give them special care, They feed, they shelter, they give us fresh air.	Leaves grow from the stem. They soak up lots of sun. And when they change it into food, then their job is done.
Without plants in our world, we simply could not live Because of all of the awesome gifts that they give.	The food is for the plant- it gives it strength and power. It helps it to grow and makes a nice flower.
The tiny plant begins as a seed that germinates. And from this moment on, here’s the journey that it takes:	Wind, birds, and bees – these are the flower’s friend. They help the life cycle to start once again.
The roots are in the dirt to help the plant grow, And hold it in place when the winds blow.	The flower makes a fruit with a seed deep inside. Some are eaten, some are blown, or some just hitch a ride.
Just like a soda straw, they suck up H2O. And when the plant gets water, stand back and watch it grow.	Once a fruit is dried and a little seed comes out, The seed will find the dirt and a new plant will sprout.”
Stems hold the plant up, they carry water to The leaves, flowers, fruit and seeds – that’s what the stems do.	<i>Junior Master Gardener Handbook</i>

Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2023.
TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2023.