



OBJECTIVES

Students will learn the important role pollinator plants play within our ecosystem.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What are edible pollinator plants?
2. What are the benefits of planting these plants?
3. What can you do with the plants once they are grown?
5. Are there any health benefits to eating these plants?
6. Why are bees and other pollinators attracted to these plants?

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Seedlings, such as, nasturtiums, calendulas, sunflowers, and/or chives

LESSON

Introduction

Gardening is a great way to get kids outside and teach them about where their food comes from. And what could be more fun for kids than getting to discuss, experience and eat what they grow? This activity is a perfect way to introduce kids to the idea of edible pollinator plants. Through discussion, planting, harvesting and tasting nasturtiums, calendulas, sunflowers, and chives, students will learn about the important role that pollinators play in our ecosystem while getting to enjoy some delicious flowers!

Have a discussion about each Edible Pollinator Plant.

Nasturtiums

Nasturtiums are an annual herb in the mustard family that is native to South America. The plant has beautiful, big leaves and vibrant flowers that come in a variety of colors including red, orange, yellow, and pink. Nasturtiums are not only pleasing to look at, but they are also edible! Both the leaves and the flowers can be eaten raw or cooked. When eaten raw, nasturtiums have a peppery flavor that makes them a great addition to salads. The flowers can also be used as a garnish on any dish. Cooking nasturtiums mellows out their flavor, making them a great addition to soups, stews, and stir-fries.

Calendulas

Calendulas are annual herbs in the daisy family that are native to Europe and North Africa. Calendulas have beautiful yellow or orange flowers and deeply lobed leaves. The entire plant is edible, with a slightly bitter taste. Calendula petals can be used as a colorful garnish on any dish or added to salads for a pop of color. The leaves can be used in soups or other cooked dishes. Calendula flowers can also be dried and used as an herbal tea.

LESSON, cont.

Sunflowers

Most people are familiar with sunflowers as being tall plants with big yellow flowers that follow the sun throughout the day. What many people don't know is that sunflowers are actually edible! Both the petals and seeds of sunflowers are edible. The petals can be used as a colorful addition to salads or as a garnish on any dish. Sunflower seeds can be eaten raw, roasted, or turned into sunflower seed butter - a delicious alternative to peanut butter!

Chives

Chives are one of the most popular herbs used in cooking. They belong to the onion family and have long, slender green leaves with small purple flowers. Chives have a mild onion flavor that is perfect for adding flavor to soups, salads, eggs, potatoes, and so much more! Chives are very easy to grow - all you need is a pot and some soil - making them the perfect herb for beginner gardeners. Plus, they will keep coming back year after year once they are established.

EXTENSIONS & VARIATIONS

After the class has learned about these edible pollinator plants, plant the seedlings in the school garden. Observe the plants in action as pollinators are busy enjoying the plant, then later in the season when the plants are fully mature, have the class do a taste test to enjoy how tasty these edible pollinator plants are!

- <https://www.almanac.com/growing-edible-flowers-your-garden>
- <https://www.hobbyfarms.com/12-edible-flowers-that-are-pollinator-friendly-too-6/>
- <https://bestfarmanimals.com/45-edible-flowers-that-honey-bees-love-part-1/>
- <https://bestfarmanimals.com/45-edible-flowers-that-honey-bees-love-part-2/>