

# HARVEST of the MONTH in the CLASSROOM



## SALAD GREENS

### HISTORY

The first documented cultivation of lettuce appeared in ancient Egyptian tomb paintings over 6,000 years ago. Salads have been celebrated since ancient times, in fact, a Greek proverb references salad greens, "Eat cress and gain wit." The earliest salads were wild greens and herbs seasoned with salt. Salad greens are the first vegetables available in spring. Most leafy vegetables that can be eaten raw are used: all varieties of lettuce, garden cress and watercress, endives, cabbage, spinach, escarole, romaine, and arugula. Lettuce is a member of the family Asteraceae, along with artichokes, marigolds, and sunflowers. It is native to the eastern Mediterranean region and has over 100 different varieties. Arugula is a spicy, mustard-like plant. It is a member of one of the dominant families in our food system: Brassicaceae. Spinach is native to Persia (now Iran) where it was known as aspanakh. Spinach arrived in Europe in the 11th century when it was brought to Spain by the Moors (Muslims). In fact, spinach was known as "the Spanish vegetable" in England.

### FUN FACTS

Spinach originated in ancient Persia. It was brought to China in the 7th Century. Today, it is known in China as the "Persian Green."

Arugula is nicknamed "salad rocket", which comes from the Latin word eruca, meaning caterpillar. This is because of their hairy stems.

During the Middle Ages, spinach leaves were sold in the form of round balls, called espinoche.

Many ancient Greeks believed that lettuce made you sleepy so they served it at the end of the meal.

### FARMER BIO



Farmer Diego Izarry-Gerould of Spring Sparrow Farm grows salad mix, lettuce, kale, tomatoes, carrots, garlic, herbs, radishes, turnips, and scallions all on 8/10ths of an acre. Spring Sparrow Farm sells through a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), to local grocery stores, bakeries, and restaurants. His favorite crop to grow is carrots because, "a fresh, well-grown carrot in good soil tastes incredible." Diego was inspired to be a farmer while taking a permaculture course in college. In 2017, he had the opportunity to lease land and start farming on his own, and he jumped at the chance! His advice for future farmers is to, "get hands-on experience. No amount of study beats direct experience."

# WHAT PART OF THE PLANT DO WE EAT?

Grades K-2 • 60 minutes



## SALAD GREENS

### OBJECTIVES

Students will explore different types of leafy greens through close observation, drawing and group discussion.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What are some leafy greens that we eat?  
When we eat salad greens, what part of the plant are we eating?  
What are the different parts of a leaf?

### MA STATE FRAMEWORK(S)

- K-LS1-1

### MATERIALS NEEDED

Magnifying glasses or microscopes  
Lettuce, spinach and arugula leaves  
Drawing paper  
Art supplies

### PROCEDURE

#### **Warm Up:** Group Discussion

Brainstorm all of the different kinds of leafy greens we eat. (Some examples are lettuce, spinach and arugula).

Discussion questions:

Why are salad greens healthy? (They are low in calories, low in fat, and high in protein, fiber, iron, and calcium).

Are all salads the same?

What are some things that you put in a salad?

#### **Main Activity:** Observe, Draw and Diagram

Show students different examples of greens we eat, such as lettuce, spinach, and arugula. What part of this plant are we eating?

Review the PARTS OF A LEAF:

**Veins:** Veins transport water, minerals and food energy through the leaf and on to the rest of the plant. They also provide structure and support the leaf.

**Petiole:** The petiole is the stalk of the leaf, which attaches to the stem of the plant.

**Lamina:** Lamina is the scientific word for blade of a leaf. This is where food is made through the process of photosynthesis.

**Epidermis:** Epidermis is the outer protective layer of a leaf. Sometimes the leaf may be waxy because the epidermis secretes a waxy protective cuticle.

Divide the class into groups and give each group some different leafy greens to observe with a microscope or magnifying lens. Have students draw and label what they see.

Bring the whole group back together to share what they noticed.

# WHAT PART OF THE PLANT DO WE EAT?

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## EXTENSIONS & VARIATIONS

Have a salad greens taste test to compare different types of salad greens. As a group, brainstorm words that could be used to describe the different flavors and textures and colors of various leafy greens.