

What is the best way to harvest our pumpkins?

PROJECT PUMPKIN (gr 3-5)

Harvesting the Garden

(ILS 19A)

Overview

This curriculum explores the relationship between people and the food they eat. By growing pumpkins in a garden plot, the curriculum takes teachers and students through six features of sustainable agriculture that separate it from conventional farming. If the entire curriculum is completed, students will gain an understanding of sustainability and people's place in the food chain.

Sustainable Agriculture, for the purpose of this curriculum, shall be defined as "a system of food production, supported by consumers, where farming operations, practices and technologies work in harmony with the natural systems that sustain life on earth."

Suggested Grade Level

This curriculum is designed for 3rd through 5th grade levels. The topics covered can be built upon in complexity throughout that age range.

Approximate Time

Dependant on the size of the garden; approximately 60 minutes.

Objectives

1. The students will harvest their garden and store the produce to sell at market.

Activity Abstract

In this lesson, students will harvest the garden. They will store the vegetables until the alternative marketing lesson which includes the market.

**Teacher note:
This activity can be done at the same time as the conclusion of the Nutrient Management experiment or as separate sessions!**

Background Information

Be sure to read all seed packets for the best instructions on harvesting each plant.

Materials

- Wheelbarrow to carry pumpkins (optional)
- Old towel
- Sharp knives to cut pumpkins (1 per adult)
- Garden gloves
- Extra adults

Procedure (Session 1)

1. Check the seed packet for harvest time. It is usually given in days from planting, but of course it will be approximate.
2. Inspect the pumpkins (and other vegetables) for proper color and size. If they look ready, they probably are.
3. Teach the students the proper ways to harvest the pumpkins. Cut pumpkins from the vines carefully, using pruning shears or a sharp knife. Leave 3" to 4" of stem attached. Snapping the stems from the vines results in many broken or missing "handles." Furthermore, pumpkins without stems usually do not keep well. Wear gloves when harvesting pumpkins because many varieties have **sharp prickles** on their stems.
4. Instruct the students to pick carefully and avoid stepping on any plants or plant parts, and try not to bump the plants or walk out of the aisle.
5. Have students work in pairs or small groups – with an adult with each to monitor knife use -- to harvest the pumpkins.
6. Wipe the dirt off with an old towel, if needed.
7. Wash and dry pumpkins thoroughly. Avoid cutting and bruising the pumpkins when handling them. Pumpkins that are not fully mature or that have been injured or subjected to heavy frost will not store very well.
8. The Alternative Marketing Activity gives you an option of what to do next with your pumpkins!