

HARVEST of the MONTH

Seasonal snacks from garden to classroom

October 2018 – Cherry Tomatoes

The CSG Educational Roots Framework (RootEd™) is grounded in our core values, and is intended to provide garden-based, experiential learning opportunities and leadership development that: cultivates gardening skills, promotes health, nurtures social & cultural development and enhances academic learning.

Trivia Question and Cherry Tomatoes Facts

● **QUESTION:** This miniature vegetable is always a favorite to be dipped in dressing, roasted or put into a salsa. It grows throughout the summer and each plant is capable of producing hundreds of them. When ripe, this vegetable can range in size from a thumb-tip to the size of a golf ball. Hint: People often disagree whether it is a fruit or a vegetable.

● **FACTS:**

- Because a tomato has seeds, it is technically considered a fruit. Given the way we eat tomatoes, however, they are commonly considered vegetables.
- Cherry tomatoes are a member of the Solanaceae family and growers in our area grow many varieties including Mr. Stripey, Oxheart, Aunt Ruby's Green and Bumblebee.
- People used to be afraid to eat tomatoes, thinking they were poisonous due to their relation to belladonna and the deadly nightshade family but tomatoes pose no threat to humans.

Garden Lessons and Activities

● **Saving Seeds -Science 3.8c**

Lesson: Have students come out into the garden in the fall. Have each student find 3 ripe cherry tomatoes. Once they have them, explain that we will be saving seeds from this year's tomatoes to grow next year. Have students squeeze the tomato juice and seeds into clear jars or bowls. Let the jars sit for 3 days in a space at room temperature, stirring once each day. Note: The juice of the tomatoes is slowly fermenting allowing the seed to separate from the gelatinous tissue from inside the ovary – therefore, the jars may smell, but that is a good sign. After 3 days, strain off the liquid and rinse the seeds in clean water. Then, have each student spread seeds out on a paper plate labeled with their name. Allow the seeds to dry on the plate for 5-6 days in a space at room temperature and out of direct sunlight. Then scrape them off the plate, package them, and have students take them home.

Extension: Have students test the germination rate of their saved seeds by planting them in seedling trays and monitoring how many grow.

● **Is It A Fruit or Vegetable?! – Science 1.1**

Lesson: Read the book *Fruit Bowl* by Mark Hoffmann that discusses what qualifies a produce as a fruit. The major characteristics that he mentions is that (1) fruits form from flowers, and (2) fruits have seeds. Have students go out to the garden and explore the food that is growing. Have students pluck ripe produce and separate it into one of two categories: fruit, not fruit. Stand at the fruit container and continue to reiterate criteria: Does it come from a flower? and does it have seeds? When done, count the number of each. Determine which has more and which has less?

Extension: Categorize the "fruits" further. Separate them between good in a fruit salad and bad in a fruit salad.

● **Storybook Suggestion: *Fruit Bowl* by Mark Hoffmann**