HARVEST of the MONTH

Seasonal snacks from garden to classroom

MAY 2015 – Strawberries

CSG uses our **Educational Roots (RootEd)** frame to design lessons for our gardens.
The four core areas of RootEd are intended to enhance academic learning and include: cultivating gardening skills, providing experiential learning opportunities, promoting health and fitness, and nurturing social & cultural development.

Trivia Question and Strawberry Facts

- QUESTION: "This fruit is in the Rose Family, and its white and yellow flower has five petals and many stamen. Its seeds are on the outside of the fruit, and when you bite it in half it is red all the way through."
- FACTS:
  - Strawberries can be found growing in the wild, however they may be hard to spot because the wild version is much smaller than ones in the garden and on farms.
  - Strawberry plants spread via above-ground "runners," which are simply run-away stems that have developed roots. Strawberry plants are normally propagated, or bred, not by seed but by uprooting the "runners" and replanting them.
  - Strawberries are high in antioxidants, vitamin C, and carry many anti-inflammatory properties.

Garden Activities

- **Seeds**
  1. Discuss with students how flowers develop into fruits with seeds. Then have students dissect three different fruits to find, separate out, and count the seeds in them, and ask students to find other examples of different types of seeds in and around the garden (ex: maple propellers, dandelion fluff, pea pods). Additionally, discuss why seeds and fruits develop differently in different plants.
  2. Many plants rely on birds to distribute their seeds. Since seeds come in all different shapes and sizes, a bird's beak is adapted to pick up those they commonly eat. Have students pick up seeds using various tools (tweezers, tongs, and pliers) that mimic different bird beaks. Then, have students see what other kinds of seeds and bugs each bird can eat in the rest of the garden.
- **Runaway plants**
  3. Strawberry plants spread by forming above-ground "runners" (plant stems that develop roots when they bend and touch the ground). Therefore, when left unmanaged, strawberries grow and form a huge patch. Have students either dig up runners from an existing strawberry patch to put into pots to give away, or have students plant a strawberry patch and talk about how they'll grow.
  4. Teach students how to use leaf texture, shape, size, and color to identify different plants. Go outside and find wild strawberries, dandelions, violets, ivy, poison ivy, etc. with students to demonstrate.
- **Harvesting**
  5. Strawberry fruits drop behind the green leaves of the plant to protect the red berry from the summer sun and hungry birds and bugs. Have students find plant adaptations in and around the garden (ex: the hairs on tomato stems that give off chemicals to defend against pests and pathogens) that help protect fruits (the offspring of plants) from damaging climate and insects.
  6. Have students identify when different plants in the garden are ready for harvest and enjoy sampling those that are ripe. Fruits like strawberries are ready for harvest when they pull easily off the stem, roots like potatoes are often ready for harvest when their above ground leaves start to die, and leaves such as spinach and lettuce are ready once they reach full size and before they form a flower stalk.
  7. Have students compare store-bought strawberries to farmers market or home-grown. Cut the berries in half and observe the color, taste, and texture differences. Discuss that fruit traveling a great distance to your plate is harvested before it's ripe to preserve it for the journey, changing its flavor.