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Lesson 1: Plant a Row for the Hungry

Objectives

Students will:

- Plant a vegetable garden
- Donate a portion of their vegetable harvest to a local food pantry or other food distribution agency (e.g., church)
- Develop an understanding of hunger issues in the United States and their community

Standards Addressed: [click here](#)

Central Concepts

- Fruits and vegetables are an important part of the diet.
- Food insecurity is a critical issue in the United States effecting millions of people each year.
- Gardeners can help their community by donating extra fruits and vegetables from their gardens.



Materials

- Books and Internet resources for garden research
- Space and soil for a vegetable garden (containers, raised beds, or in-ground beds)
- Vegetable seeds or seedlings

Discussion Topics

- We know it's important to eat fruits and vegetables every day. Ask students, *Does everybody get enough fruits and vegetables in their diets? Why not?* (Some choose not to eat well. Some aren't aware of which foods are healthful. Still others lack access to a source of healthful foods, and some are poor and have to choose between paying bills and buying food.)
- *How might we help people in need of food?* (Plant extra edibles in our garden that we can donate to food shelf.)
- *How might donating part of our harvest contribute to our community?*

Activity

1. Begin by introducing your students to the issue of hunger. See these Web sites for support materials:

[Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger](#)

[Hunger 101](#)

2. Introduce your class to the [Plant a Row for the Hungry Program \(PAR\)](#). This national campaign, created and sponsored by the Garden Writers Association Foundation, taps the generosity of gardeners to help feed their needy neighbors. The program encourages gardeners to plant extra produce for donation to a local food pantry, shelter, or soup kitchen. [Click here](#) to learn how to participate in the program and connect with local receiving agencies.

3. Ask a representative from a food bank or other hunger-fighting agency to come and speak to the class to talk about what they do, who they serve, and why their work is important. Give your students time to ask questions about how they could help. Ask the representative for a list of vegetables they would like to be able to distribute to participants.

4. Plan a vegetable garden. Use garden books, catalogs and the Internet to research information about vegetable varieties, planting dates and planting instructions. (The National Gardening Association's [Food Garden Guide](#) is especially useful.) Be sure to include some of the vegetables requested by your guest speaker.

May 2006 Kids Garden News

Contents

Lesson Feature: Planting the Seeds of Community

[Introduction](#)

[Background Information](#)

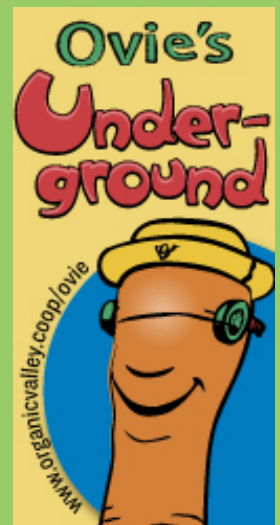
[Lesson 1: Plant a Row for the Hungry](#)

[Lesson 2: Understanding and Conserving Community Water](#)

[Program Spotlight: "Remember Me" Rose School Garden Awards](#)

[News Room: Free classroom resources, funding opportunities, more](#)

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5. Plant and maintain your garden.

6. Harvest and donate vegetables. If possible, let youth help with delivery as a way for them to witness the impact of their contributions.

Extensions

English: Create a handout about each vegetable grown describing how to prepare it, nutritional information, and a special recipe or two. These handouts can be distributed at the food pantry and also sent home with the youth.

Math: Food pantries tend to equate weight of food with a dollar value to quantify donations. Weigh your harvest before donating it and keep track of your donations throughout the season. Use various kinds of charts and graphs to illustrate the data. For additional math practice, use different techniques to express the weight and volume of your donation. Conversion charts can be found at PickYourOwn.org.

Communications: Invite students to create a poster, newsletter, or other form of media to share what they've learned through participating in PAR. Distribute the media to school, administrators, parents, and even local news outlets so they can see the impact of students' gardening efforts.

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