

Growing Food



Grow food, don't waste it ↗

The food that we see in the grocery store comes to us from all around the world. Have you ever wondered what the food journey looks like?

Let's consider the journey of a single strawberry. It begins as a seed and relies on water, sunlight and good weather conditions to grow into a plant. Because they are so delicate, strawberries are picked by hand, then

sorted by size, color and shape. Some strawberries make the cut but many don't. Those that do are packaged and shipped, often traveling thousands of kilometers before they get onto our table. So, if we waste even a single strawberry, we are wasting all of the energy that went into getting it into our hands. To learn more, follow the strawberry's journey from flower to the refrigerator in this [2-minute video](#).⁵²

Companion Planting—Growing Food with Friends!

Time: 30 mins

Nurturing: 12-16 weeks

Some plants grow well together; these are called *companion plants*. [The Three Sisters](#): corn, beans and squash, for example, have been grown together by Indigenous communities across North America for thousands of years. Corn grows tall and provides a stalk for beans to climb. Beans return important nutrients to the soil as they grow, and squash shades the ground with her broad leaves to keep weeds from moving in.⁵³

Research combinations of companion plants.

Experiment with watering, light and adding compost. Some plants will grow faster than others—watch and see what you can learn.



↖ Three Sisters

You'll Need:

- Seeds (cucumber, beans, tomatoes, squash—seek plants that grow well together and plan to plant in groups once your plants are big enough to move outside)⁵⁴
- Soil
- Small cups or newspaper to [fold into pots](#)⁵⁵
- Sunlight

Making it Happen:

1. In small groups, research companion planting to decide which plants might grow well together, and decide who your companion planting buddies will be.
2. Fill pots or cups and gently with soil.
3. Check your seed. What shape and color is it? Can you imagine how this hard, dry seed will transform into a full plant and grow food?
4. Poke a small, two-seed-deep hole in soil. Place the seed in the hole and gently cover with soil.
5. Label your pot with the planting date and put it on a tray or plastic lid to catch excess water.
6. Water lightly—too much water can wash away your seed's soil.
7. Place in a sunny window.
8. Check soil every day, keeping it moist but not soggy.
9. Track your plants' growth, leaf color and soil texture.
10. When your plants are big enough and all danger of frost has passed, transplant your plants in their companion groups outside to a sunny location. If you made your own compost (see Activity 18); add it to your soil for extra nutrients.



Did you know?

Agriculture accounts for 70 percent of freshwater use around the world.⁵⁷ Even a single hamburger takes 2,500 liters of water to produce! Use the [Water Footprint Calculator](#) to find out how much water goes into producing our food.⁵⁸



CLAIM
10 Grower-Chef points

What did you Learn?

- Did you see how your companion plants supported each other?
- What strategies helped or hindered the growth of your plant?
- What did you learn? What would you do differently next time?
- Did you feel a connection with your plant? If so, how did that change the way you think about food?

Want to do More?

- **Volunteer at a community garden.** Now that you know how to grow food, you can help others in your community do the same.
- **Go gleaning.** At harvest time, food is often not harvested because it's too small, odd-shaped or not quite ripe. You can help a gleaning organization and donate your "second harvest."
- **Start a food garden.** Find space for a garden and start small with compost, seeds or seedlings. Find resources online like the [Food is Free](#) project to get started.⁵⁶

CLAIM
10 Rescuer points

CLAIM
20 Grower-Chef or Influencer points

⁵²Save the Food / Ad Council (2016). The Extraordinary Life and Times of Strawberry. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WREXBUZBrS8>>

⁵³Winter Green Studios (2009). What is a Three Sisters Garden? <https://www.wintergreenstudios.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/Three-Sisters-Garden.pdf>>

⁵⁴Heeman's Beginner's Guide to Companion Planting. <https://heeman.ca/garden-guides/companion-planting/>>

⁵⁵How to make newspaper flower pots. <<https://www.forgreenies.com/origami-newspaper-seedling-pots>>

⁵⁶Food is Free (2018). Grow Free Food and Community in your Front Yard. <<http://foodisfreeproject.org>>

⁵⁷World Bank (2018). Water in Agriculture. <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water-in-agriculture>>

⁵⁸Water Footprint Calculator (2017). Food's Big Water Footprint. <<https://www.watercalculator.org/water-use/water-in-your-food/foods-big-water-footprint/>>