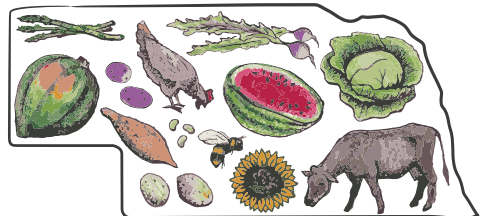


Harvest of the Month

SWEET POTATOES



Farm to ECE

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

NEBRASKA



Download and print items from
the Harvest of the Month toolkit at:

www.education.ne.gov/ns/farm-to-school/harvest-of-the-month

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HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

FLEXIBILITY – FOR YOU!

Use the provided activity calendars as a guide to incorporate this resource into your classroom. Follow the calendars as written, or use them as inspiration and select the activities that work best for you, the children, and your schedule.

TRY READING THE SAME BOOK EVERY DAY FOR A WEEK.

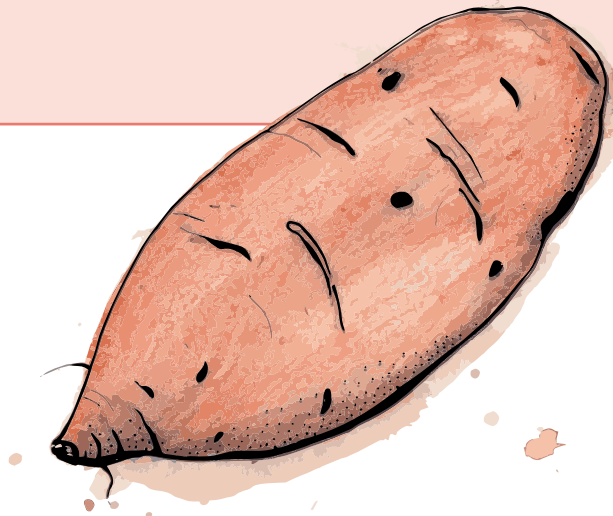
Reading the same book every day for a week allows children to learn more about the story and dive deeper into the book's meaning. Rereading a story leads to greater reading confidence. Ask discussion questions to encourage children to retell the story. This practice will help prepare children for more complex narratives down the road.

NO BOOK? TRY A READ-ALoud VIDEO!

Many books in the suggested reading lists have a read-aloud video published on the internet. If you don't have access to the physical books in your classroom or public library, check your library's digital catalog or search for a read-aloud video elsewhere online.

DON'T HESITATE TO REPEAT ACTIVITIES.

Repetition provides the practice that children need to learn and master new skills. As children repeat activities, they will improve speed, increase confidence, and strengthen the connections in their brain that help them learn!



ACTIVITY CALENDAR: PLANNING FOR ONE MONTH

WEEKLY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Student Understanding: Sweet potatoes are foods that grow as roots underground. Book of the Week: <u>Vegetables</u> by Sarah Andersen	Quick Bite Activity for Exploration Story Time with Book of the Week	Process Art Activity	Story Time with Book of the Week Recipe: <u>Whipped Sweet Potatoes</u>	Video: <u>Composting Basics</u>	Gross Motor Activity
Student Understanding: Sweet potato vines have heart-shaped leaves. Book of the Week: <u>Up, Down and Around</u> by Katherine Ayers and Nadine Bernard Westcott	Quick Bite One Recipe: <u>Roasted Sweet Potatoes</u>	Story Time with Book of the Week	Video: <u>From Farm to You: Sweet Potatoes</u>	Matching Activity Story Time with Book of the Week	Song: <u>Soon as We All Cook Sweet Potatoes</u> Sweet Potato Coloring Sheet
Student Understanding: By composting kitchen waste, we enrich the soil for growing sweet potatoes and other foods. Book of the Week: <u>Compost Stew</u> by Mary McKenna Siddals and Ashley Wolff	Quick Bite Two	Story Time with Book of the Week	Dramatic Play Activity	Video: <u>Curious George Makes Compost</u>	Video: <u>It's Not Scary, It's Decayed</u>
Student Understanding: Sweet potatoes are tasty to eat in many ways! Book of the Week: <u>A Green, Green Garden</u> by Mercer Mayer	Story Time with Book of the Week	Farm Story with Props	Recipe: <u>Harvest Delight</u> Story Time with Book of the Week	Gross Motor Activity	Science Activity

ACTIVITY CALENDAR: PLANNING FOR TWO WEEKS

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
WEEK ONE	Quick Bite Activity for Exploration Story Time with Suggested Books for Reading	Process Art Activity Video: <u>From Farm to You: Sweet Potatoes</u>	Quick Bite One Recipe: <u>Roasted Sweet Potatoes</u>	Matching Activity Video: <u>Composting Basics</u>	Gross Motor Activity Song: <u>Soon as We All Cook Sweet Potatoes</u> Sweet Potato Coloring Sheet
WEEK TWO	Quick Bite Two Story Time with Suggested Books for Reading	Farm Story with Props Story Time with Suggested Books for Reading	Science Activity Dramatic Play Activity	Gross Motor Activity Video: <u>It's Not Scary, it's Decayed</u>	Recipe: <u>Harvest Delight</u> Video: <u>Curious George Makes Compost</u>

RECIPE NOTE:

The recipes on the activity calendars are meant to spark ideas and give you a place to start. Programs such as Harvest of the Month offer additional options you can explore. Feel free to adapt or swap recipes to match your needs, resources, and schedule.

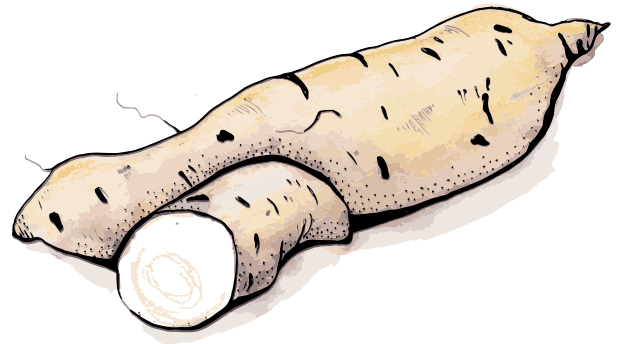
ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR READING

- [*Vegetables*](#) by Sarah Andersen
- [*Up, Down and Around*](#) by Katherine Ayers and Nadine Bernard Westcott
- [*Compost Stew*](#) by Mary McKenna Siddals and Ashley Wolff
- [*A Green, Green Garden*](#) by Mercer Mayer
- [*Water Can Be*](#) by Laura Purdie Salas and Violeta Dabija
- [*Drop: An Adventure Through the Water Cycle*](#) by Emily Kate Moon
- [*Pancakes, Pancakes!*](#) by Eric Carle

SONGS, POEMS, AND VIDEOS

- From Farm to You: Sweet Potatoes | LNKTV Health
» youtube.com/watch?v=C3b02TDEHC8
- Composting Basics | LNKTV Health
» youtube.com/watch?v=BxhKbaZ3gd8&t=1s
- Curious George Makes Compost | Curious George Official
» youtube.com/watch?v=Df7KnJNANsA&t=2s
- Susie's Song - It's Not Scary, It's Decayed - Sid the Science Kid | The Jim Hensen Company
» youtube.com/watch?v=X0IFxL5oJRE
- Soon as We All Cook Sweet Potatoes | Pete Seeger
» youtube.com/watch?v=R9eZJvRfCKk



INVOLVING FAMILIES

Involve families in the sweet potatoes unit by sharing the Sweet Potatoes Fun Facts document. Add the information to a newsletter, incorporate the fun facts into a bulletin board, or send the sheet home so families can read through it and learn more together. Additional ways to involve families using the resources in this lesson could also include sharing the recipes and suggested books or inviting them to participate in one of the activities.

QUICK BITES

Harvest of the Month Quick Bites encourage children to participate in taste testing and provide activities for exploration. Children have the opportunity to learn more about the food on their plate and give feedback on food samples.

HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

These activities are aligned with the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines for children ages 4-5. Use the lessons to engage children in hands-on activities to practice fine and gross motor skills, explore crafts and music, engage the senses, and more! All activities are “center” or “play station” based for small groups of children to complete at a time. Reference the Activity Calendars for scheduling inspiration.

SWEET POTATO FUN FACTS

Children are learning about sweet potatoes! Extend learning outside of the classroom by creating a positive experience for children with a conversation about sweet potatoes. Help them learn more about new foods and farming in Nebraska!



SWEET POTATOES STAY FRESH LONGEST IN A DRY, COOL, DARK PLACE LIKE A PANTRY.

Placing sweet potatoes in the refrigerator can change their flavor and is not recommended.



SWEET POTATOES ARE TUBERS THAT GROW UNDERGROUND.

We commonly eat the mature root of the plant, but young, tender leaves can also be eaten.



SWEET POTATO PLANTS LIKE FULL SUN AND ARE SENSITIVE TO FROST.

Sweet potato roots take 3-6 months to mature.



SWEET POTATOES ARE PLANTED FROM A PIECE OF SWEET POTATO ITSELF CALLED A SLIP.

Slips develop as roots and stems from a sweet potato in water or a bed of dirt.



SWEET POTATOES ARE NUTRITIONAL POWERHOUSES!

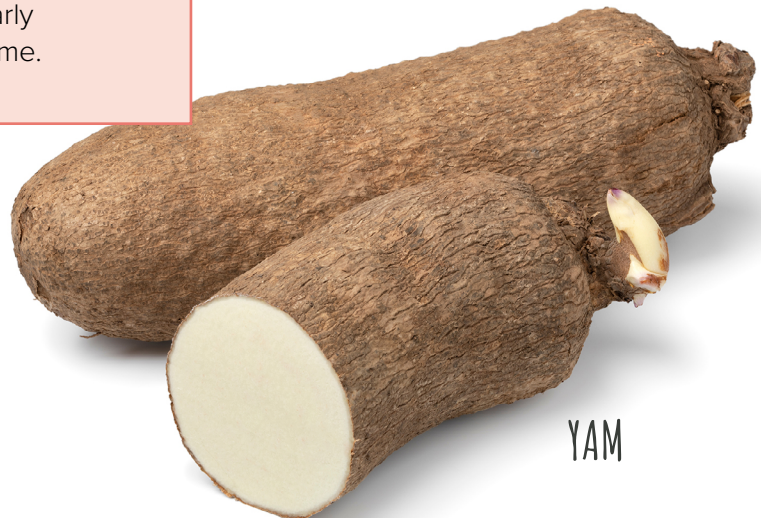
Beta carotene, vitamins A and C, and potassium are a variety of nutrients that reduce risk of disease and promote health.

PEOPLE IN THE U.S. SOMETIMES CALL SWEET POTATOES "YAMS" BECAUSE THEIR COLORS ARE SIMILAR, BUT THEY ARE DIFFERENT FOODS!

The larger, sweeter, and moister orange sweet potato was first grown in the U.S. in the 1930s. An advertising campaign called them "yams" like a similarly-colored root vegetable native to Africa to differentiate them from the dryer white and yellow-skinned early varieties of sweet potato available at that time.



SWEET POTATO



YAM

QUICK BITES

Did you know? Children may need to try a new food 10-15 times before they determine whether or not they enjoy it. Taste tests are a great opportunity for children to try new, healthy foods in a low-risk setting. Refer to the Taste Test Guide for food allergy information, precautions, and safety ideas before completing these activities with children.

QUICK BITE ONE

Purchase and prepare a variety of sweet potato products in forms the children already often eat in regular potato products, like fries, tots, mashed, cubed, and roasted. Optionally, purchase and prepare similar regular potato products to test side-by-side. Be sure to check the freezer section of your grocery store for oven-baked options like crinkle fries!

Draw or create a collage of the sweet potato products children will try. Write the name of each product on the paper and display it where children can see it throughout the sweet potato unit (or include both sweet potato and potato products if comparing the two). Under each food picture, create a graph to show who liked the food and who didn't. Invite children to place or write their name in the appropriate column after each taste test (or stickers could be used for voting easily). For these savory taste tests, serve sweet potatoes with the same condiments you would use for regular potatoes: ketchup or fry sauce with fries and tots, butter and sour cream with mashed sweet potatoes, and salt and pepper with roasted sweet potatoes. Compare one pair of potato products each day!

QUICK BITE TWO

Try sweet potatoes served as dessert.

Example: Prepare a sweet dessert dish using sweet potatoes. Warming spices like nutmeg, cinnamon, and ginger enhance the natural flavor of sweet potatoes. Search the internet for "sweet potato desserts" and choose from a wide variety of options based on your resources. Invite the children's input by asking them to vote between recipes you're willing to try, then prepare that dish for the group!

ACTIVITY FOR EXPLORATION

Use water and sunlight to sprout slips from a sweet potato for children to observe over a matter of weeks.

New sweet potato plants are grown from transplanted sprouts, called slips. These are used instead of seeds to start a new crop of sweet potato vines.

Materials:

- clear container
- toothpicks
- sweet potatoes
- water
- knife
- sunlight

To start your slips, you need one or more clean and healthy sweet potatoes. Each sweet potato can produce up to 50 slip sprouts. To create sprouts, carefully wash your potato(es) and cut them either in half or in large sections. Place each section in a jar or glass of water with half of the potato below the water and half above. You can also sprout from whole sweet potatoes if you prefer. Use toothpicks to hold the potato in place. Refill the container every few days as water evaporates from the jar or is absorbed into the new roots. After a few days, you will be able to see roots from the sweet potato. After a couple of weeks, you can see sprouts from the sweet potato!

Farmers mostly grow slips by placing sweet potatoes in soil, but rooting in water is another way we can start sweet potato slips.

HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

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SCIENCE ACTIVITY - FROM A LIQUID TO A SOLID: PANCAKE BATTER SCIENCE

Children will investigate changing states of matter as they make sweet potato pancakes, which contain foods that come from farms.

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MATCHING ACTIVITY - LIFE CYCLE SCULPTING

Children sculpt and identify sweet potato life cycle moments using reference images and play dough.

PAGE 16

PROCESS ART ACTIVITY - RAIN PAINTING USING GRAVITY

Children explore gravity's affect on water to create a "rain cloud" painting displaying the trail of colored droplets moved by gravity from imaginary clouds. This process art allows children a hands-on experience where they can notice and appreciate their own creations and the work of others.

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GROSS MOTOR ACTIVITY - TRAVEL ALONG THE SWEET POTATO VINE

Children practice hopping and landing along a sweet potato vine path created with chalk or painter's tape. As they jump from one leaf or tuber to the next, they develop balance, coordination, and locomotor skills while observing the distinctly heart-shaped leaves and irregularly-shaped sweet potatoes.

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DRAMATIC PLAY ACTIVITY - COMPOST STEW PICTURE CHARADES

Children use actions, sounds, and props to portray an ingredient of a compost heap. In this way, children recreate the relationship of story elements from picture books and their surroundings using their body to act out cues and express what they observe.

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FARM STORY WITH PROPS

Read the story and have children follow along with the photos. Use the circle time activity props to enhance the experience!

SCIENCE ACTIVITY

FROM A LIQUID TO A SOLID:
PANCAKE BATTER SCIENCE

Standard (S.01): Demonstrates a basic awareness and use of scientific concepts.

Standard (AL.02): Demonstrates active inquiry, persistence, problem identification, and application of knowledge to new situations.

Children will describe observable phenomena using adjectives and labels as they investigate changing states of matter using some foods that come from farms. Children use materials and activities to investigate cause and effect, including water play and droppers while using the process of creating art to appreciate ideas and observations of their world.



THE GOAL

Children will investigate changing states of matter as they make sweet potato pancakes, which contain foods that come from farms.

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity is best implemented as a medium-sized center with 5-6 students. There is a picture book portion and a scientific exploration portion observing a liquid (sweet potato pancake batter) becoming a solid (pancakes!).

MATERIALS NEEDED

- **Book:** Pancakes, Pancakes by Eric Carle or read aloud video: [youtube.com/watch?v=5-9ljf-XK9U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-9ljf-XK9U)
- **Ingredients:**
 - » 1 cup cooked mashed sweet potatoes
 - » 2 tablespoons packed light brown sugar
 - » 1 ½ teaspoon baking powder
 - » ¾ cup flour
 - » 1 tablespoon maple syrup or appropriate substitute
 - » ¼ teaspoon salt
 - » 2 large eggs
 - » 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 - » Pinch nutmeg
 - » ½ cup milk
 - » 2 tablespoons melted butter + more for cooking
- **Cooking Utensils:**
 - » Electric frying pan
 - » Cooking spray
 - » Butter
 - » Measuring cups and spoons
 - » Mixing bowl, spoon, pancake turner
 - » Small plates and forks (one per child)

Picture book portion

1. Ask children where they think food comes from.
 - » Explain where you think wheat is grown. Same for sweet potatoes.
 - » Tell me where you think chickens and cows can be found.
2. Introduce and read the story, *Pancakes, Pancakes*, by Eric Carle. This is a story about a boy who wants to eat a giant pancake for breakfast and needs to find the ingredients.
3. Focus on each of the ingredients in the story and where they came from. At the end of the story, have the children recall where each of the ingredients came from: where wheat is grown, where chicken and cows can be found.

Liquid to Solid: Pancake Batter Science portion

4. Be sure to have children wash their hands before helping with the pancakes. Place the electric frying pan in an area where children can observe the pancakes cooking but is out of their reach.
5. Invite the children to investigate changes from liquid to solid by making panakes using some of the same ingredients they learned about in the book, and some leftover mashed sweet potatoes like they've been learning about.
 - » Display and discuss characteristics of each ingredient.
6. Invite children to help measure the ingredients into the bowl, taking turns using the measuring tools and spoon for stirring.
 - » Discuss the changes as the dry ingredients are mixed with the liquids: Describe the ingredients (mashed sweet potatoes, flour, eggs, milk, salt, brown sugar, spices, melted butter). How do the ingredients change when they are mixed together?
7. Spray the electric frying pan with cooking spray and heat to a medium setting (away from the children).
8. Pour batter into 3" puddles on the hot pan. Turn the pancakes over when the batter has bubbled and the edges look dry.
9. When pancakes are lightly browned, remove from pan and place pancakes on plates. Distribute plates of pancakes to the children, and discuss how the batter changed.
 - » All foods are different forms of matter - liquid, solid, or gas. Some foods can change. Changes in matter can come from mixing things together or changing the temperature. For example, water is a liquid. When it is frozen, it is a solid. When water is boiled, it becomes steam, which is a form of gas.
 - » Similarly, flour and salt are solids. Milk is a liquid. When solids are mixed together with a liquid, they change. When we made pancakes, the flour and salt changed from a solid to a liquid.
 - » Not all solids change when mixed with a liquid; for example, sand does not change to a liquid when mixed with water.
10. Distribute the forks and butter to the children, and enjoy!

ENGAGE THE CHILDREN

Engage children to help develop language, socialization, fine motor, and scientific investigation skills.

1. Ask children about what they are doing.
2. Ask children to provide explanations.
3. Ask children the following questions to help them make the connection from their lives to the farm.
 - » How do sweet potatoes change from a solid to liquid-like mash? (high temperatures from cooking change them)
 - » Who grows the ingredients that make up our pancakes? (farmers or farm workers)

MATCHING ACTIVITY

SWEET POTATO LIFE CYCLE SCULPTING

Standard (M.03): Demonstrates awareness of routines, predictable patterns, and attributes that can be measured.

Standard (AL.02): Demonstrates active inquiry, persistence, problem identification, and application of knowledge to new situations.

Standard (HP.01): Uses finger and hand control to operate and use small objects demonstrating fine motor coordination.

Sorting and grouping things together is an important cognitive skill. It teaches children to notice similarities and differences, learn to categorize, and develops early literacy and numeracy skills.

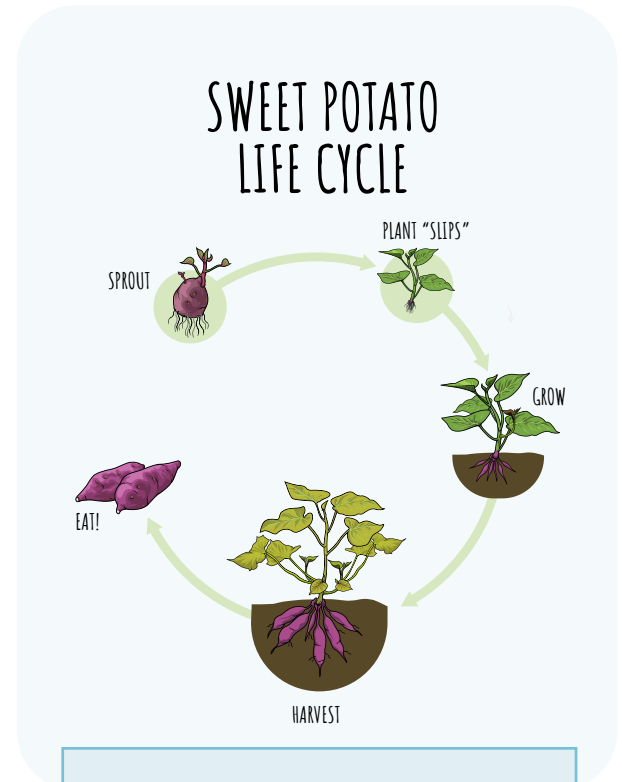
THE GOAL

Children sculpt and identify sweet potato life cycle moments using reference images and play dough.

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity can be implemented as a small center of 2-4 children. Children will recreate moments in the life of a sweet potato plant, so it is good to introduce children to the Sweet Potato Farm Story with Props to give them a foundation for this activity.

1. Ask children to review what they know about how plants grow. What do plants need? How can they get light, water, and soil?
 - » Introduce images showing four stages of the sweet potato's life cycle: sweet potatoes sprout from other sweet potatoes (bedding), are transplanted into fields (planting), grow long vines above ground and sweet potatoes underground (growing), and the parts we eat are the enlarged, colorful sweet potato roots (harvest).
2. Based on your classroom and the children participating, determine how much autonomy or direction the children are ready for:
 - » Hands-on Helper Option: Write each stage of the sweet potato's life cycle onto a separate paper plate. Shape modeling clay, narrating a stage in the life cycle, and ask children to place the shapes to create a life cycle stage on the corresponding plate.



MATERIALS NEEDED

- Modeling clay, play dough, or air dry clay (optional: various colors)
- Disposable plates for display and labeling
- Sweet potato life cycle images

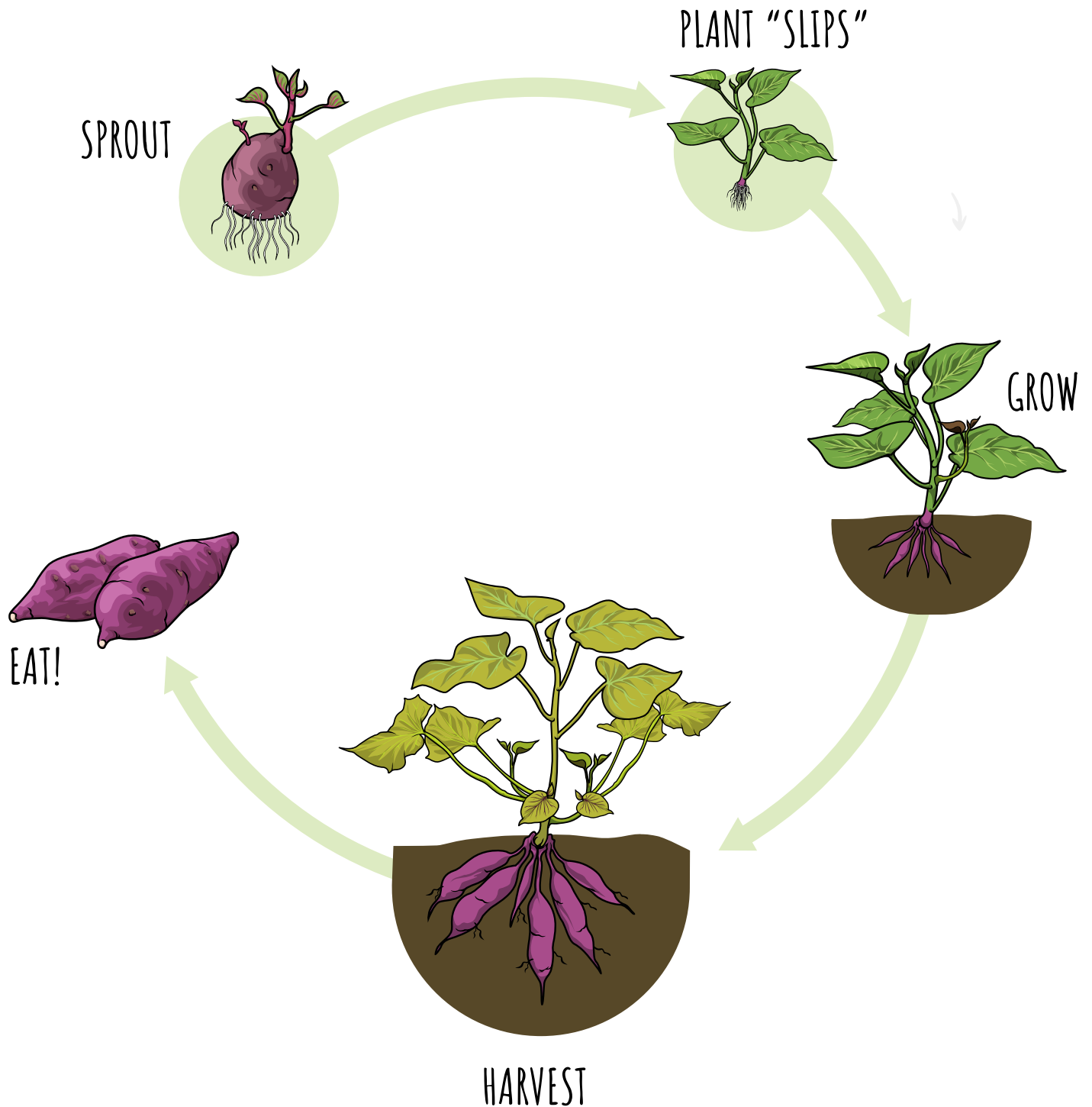
- » Mirror Group Option: Choose one stage of the life cycle (can inform them or ask them to vote on one), then narrate the actions of sculpting parts of the plant as children and adult sculpt the same stage of the life cycle together. Narrate: we are
 - A. rolling clay into a ball then gently shaping it into irregular sweet potatoes to “bed” into soil
 - B. rolling thin lines to be roots and sprout of the “slips,”
 - C. vines of the growing plant, or
 - D. placing vines with leaves above and sweet potatoes below soil. Feel free to choose from these suggestions or other moments in the life cycle.
 - » Autonomous Sculptors Option: Divide a paper plate into 4 sections. Give children modeling material to sculpt each stage of the life cycle. Label each stage when finished to reinforce vocabulary.
5. Display sculpted clay to use as visual aids in discussing sweet potatoes during this unit.

ENGAGE THE CHILDREN

Engage children to help develop language, socialization, scientific observation, and prediction skills.

1. Ask children about what they are doing.
2. Ask children to provide explanations.
3. Ask children the following questions to help them make the connection from their lives to the farm.
 - » Sweet potato plants start from “slips” or sprouts that grow from sweet potatoes. What do we usually put in soil to start a plant? (seed)
 - » What do “slips” and seeds have in common? (They both can grow into plants.)
 - » Where do sweet potatoes grow? (underground/in the soil)

SWEET POTATO LIFE CYCLE



PROCESS ART ACTIVITY

RAIN PAINTING USING GRAVITY

Standard (AL.01): Develops foundational skills that support initiative, self-direction, and curiosity as a learner.

Standard (CA.02): Develops foundational skills that support creative expression through the process, production, and appreciation of visual art forms

Process art is to engage and explore with art for the creative process and the joy of creating rather than getting an end product. Process art emphasizes exploration, experimentation, and expression. Children's use of materials and techniques allows them to create their own unique works without set expectations or guidelines.

THE GOAL

Children explore gravity's affect on water to create a "rain cloud" painting displaying the trail of colored droplets moved by gravity from imaginary clouds. This process art allows children a hands-on experience where they can notice and appreciate their own creations and the work of others.



MATERIALS NEEDED

- Liquid watercolors or food coloring (liquid watercolors are more washable)
- Cotton balls
- School glue
- Pipettes or eye droppers
- Water
- Tray or drop cloth
- Cardstock or watercolor paper (these thicker papers withstand the amount of water)
- Easel, clipboard, or empty binder (one per child)
- Optional book: [*Drop: An Adventure Through the Water Cycle*](#) by Emily Kate Moon provides a narrative for learning about the science of the water cycle.
- Optional book: [*Water Can Be...*](#) by Laura Purdie Salas and Violeta Dubija is a more poetic and imaginative observation of water in its many forms in and around living things."

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity can be implemented in a size based on the amount of art supplies available to students at one time. Please structure around the number of easels, clipboards, or empty binders able to hold the paper work surface at a tilt and your preference.

1. Begin by discussing water with children: the way it travels around the world through the water cycle, and the ways living things interact and rely on water.
 - » Plants need water or they will wither and die. The water on Earth is the only water that has ever been here, cycling from rain falling to the surface in oceans, lakes, rivers, and groundwater, then through plants and animals, and back into the air again (transpiration or evaporation) to form clouds; thus begins the cycle again and again!
 - » Optional introduction to the activity: Read [*Water Can Be...*](#) by Laura Purdie Salas and Violeta Dubija or [*Drop: An Adventure Through the Water Cycle*](#) by Emily Kate Moon to turn children's attention and imagination to water all around us.
2. Let's use gravity to create art today. We'll observe the trail of "raindrops" on our papers, imagining that they are falling from a rain cloud.
3. Have children glue cotton balls to their paper to make clouds.
4. Mix water and liquid watercolors (or food coloring) to make the tinted water/liquid paint for children to drop onto their papers.
 - » Cool colors mix well with each other to create multiple tints, and warm colors mix well with each other to do the same. Mixing cool colors with warm, however, causes colors to become muddied and brown. You may want to choose to limit the palette you offer children to one family of colors or another.
 - » Warm colors include yellow, orange, and red. Cool colors are green, blue, and purple.
5. Place paper on an easel, clipboard, or binder at an angle for each child. The angle will help the paint run and drip, leaving a trail along the page.
6. Using the eye dropper, children can drip colored water "rain" on the page. What happens when dropping the liquid in the clouds? What about on the page? If clouds get full of water, encourage children to give them a squeeze to make it rain that way.

ENGAGE THE CHILDREN

Engage children to help develop language, socialization, fine motor, and touch sensory skills.

1. Ask children about what they are doing.
2. Ask children to provide explanations.
3. Ask children the following questions to help them make the connection from their lives to the farm.
 - » What happens if plants don't get water? (They will wither and die.)
 - » What force of nature pulls rain toward the earth? (gravity)
 - » Who waters and cares for plants so they can produce food for people to eat? (farmers and farm workers or field workers)

GROSS MOTOR ACTIVITY

TRAVEL ALONG THE SWEET POTATO VINE

Standard (HP.02): Child demonstrates effective and efficient use of large muscles for movement, position, and to explore the environment.

Developmentally appropriate large-muscle games help children develop stamina, endurance, control, balance, and coordination of body movements. These are also a fun way children get to experience spatial awareness - an understanding of where objects are in relation to one another and to their own bodies as they hop, jump, run, and play.

THE GOAL

Children practice hopping and landing along a sweet potato vine path created with chalk or painter's tape. As they jump from one leaf or tuber to the next, they develop balance, coordination, and locomotor skills while observing the distinctly heart-shaped leaves and irregularly-shaped sweet potatoes.

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity is best implemented with a large-group center of 6–8 children.

1. Prepare the space: create a winding sweet potato vine with heart-shaped leaves, curving stems, and irregularly shaped sweet potatoes. Use sidewalk chalk outdoors or painter's tape indoors to create the shapes on the play surface. If it works for your group, invite children to help create the vine.
2. Introduce the movement challenge: explain and demonstrate one or more ways children can use their hands, feet, balance, and coordination to travel along the vine.
 - » Show the Locomotor Actions reference as a visual reminder of movement options. Allow children to choose how they would like to travel along the vine.

Optional:

- Play Pete Seeger's song, [*Soon as We All Cook Sweet Potatoes*](#), while children complete the activity.
- Relay Race option: Turn the activity into a relay. Divide children into two teams and allow one side to begin. The next child begins after receiving an elbow bump from the previous teammate who completed the journey across the vine. Use a stopwatch to see how long it takes each team to finish, then invite children to try again and see if they can improve their teamwork and time.



MATERIALS NEEDED

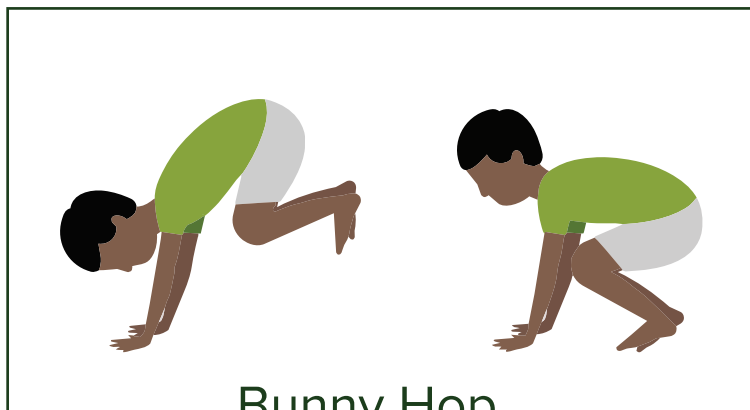
- Sidewalk chalk (outdoors) or painter's tape (indoors)
- Locomotor Actions Reference poster

ENGAGE THE CHILDREN

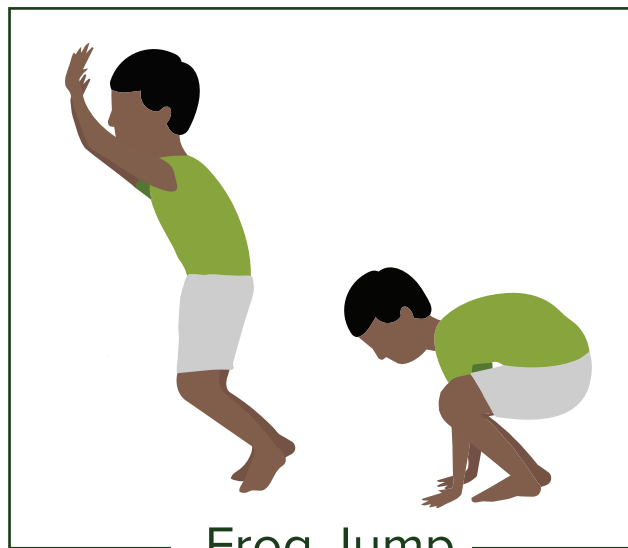
Engage children to help develop language, socialization, large-muscle locomotor, and teamwork skills.

1. Ask children about what they are doing.
2. Ask children to provide explanations.
3. Ask children the following questions to help them make the connection from their lives to the farm.
 - » In our game, the sweet potato leaves create our stepping stones! What are some real insects that might hop from sweet potato leaf to sweet potato leaf? (Bugs like aphids, beetles, and weevils like to eat sweet potato leaves.)
 - » What shape are sweet potato vine leaves? (heart)
 - » Sweet potato leaves are usually green or purple. What can leaves changing color tell farmers? (At the end of the growing season, yellowing and dying leaves can mean that the sweet potatoes underground are almost fully mature and ready for harvest.)

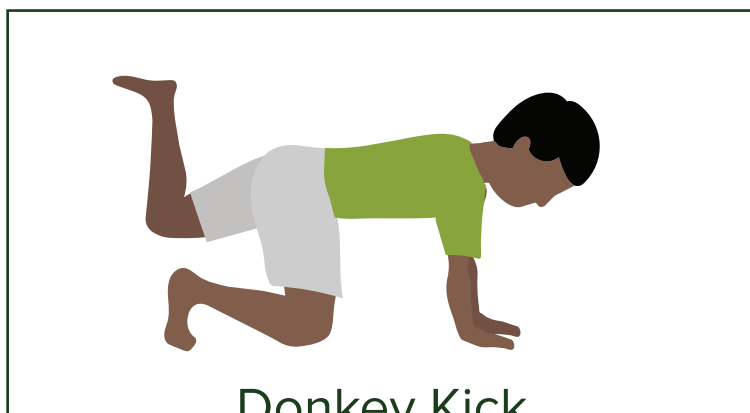
Locomotor Actions



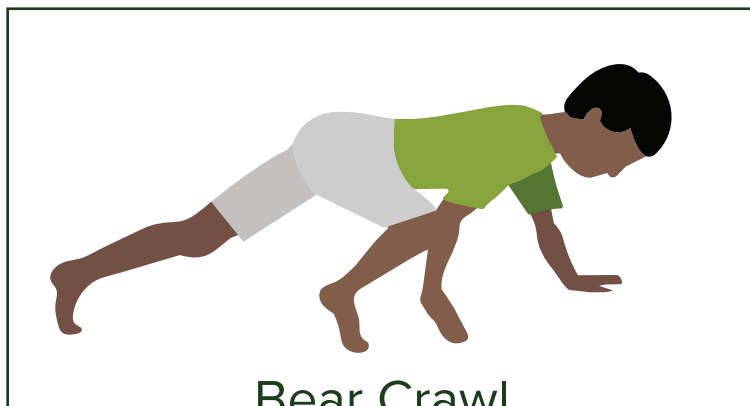
Bunny Hop



Frog Jump



Donkey Kick



Bear Crawl



Crab Walk



DRAMATIC PLAY ACTIVITY

COMPOST STEW
PICTURE CHARADES

Standard (CA.04): Expresses creativity using puppetry, storytelling, dance, plays, and theater.

Standard (SE.03): Develops foundational skills to support cooperation and prosocial behavior.

Dramatic play has many benefits for children. It allows children to explore self-empowerment while allowing them to make choices and act out their observations. It helps them to find new connections to their point of view while they learn problem-solving skills while playing with their peers.

THE GOAL

Children use actions, sounds, and props to portray an ingredient of a compost heap. In this way, children recreate the relationship of story elements from picture books and their surroundings using their body to act out cues and express what they observe.

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity is best implemented as a medium-size center with 4-5 children playing at a time.

The Picture Charade cards use image prompts (rather than just word or phrase prompts in traditional charades), which makes it easier for children to participate who are still too young to read. Words are also included on the cards to offer exposure to print and for emerging readers to enjoy, but allow children to approve answers like “pumpkin” for the card with a jack-o-lantern pictured. It is developmentally appropriate to include other interpretations rather than forcing an exact answer. Allow the children autonomy to approve the answer, which can lead to great vocabulary discussions!

Begin with reading the book *Compost Stew* by Mary McKenna Siddals and Ashley Wolff. Explain that we will be playing Picture Charades with cards showing composting parts from the book.

1. Choose the first actor. The role of actor must rotate between all players - every player must be an actor before the first player can take on this role again.
2. The actor takes the top card from the pile and acts out what they see.
 - » Actors use body movements and facial expressions to act out what they see on the card.
 - » Modify the game play to include sounds and noises if desired to make it easier for children to participate, or simple props in the game space.



MATERIALS NEEDED

- One set of Picture Charade cards
- Compost Stew book by Mary McKenna Siddals and Ashley Wolff or read aloud video: [youtube.com/watch?v=ECAoR9dV-5w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECAoR9dV-5w)
- Nebraska Department of Education [Composting Basics](#) handout guide
- Optional resource to explore: Can I Compost This? interactive visual website compostthis.co.uk

3. The actor now has an unlimited amount of time to act out the charade for their teammates. The guessing can continue until the charade is guessed correctly, or until the actor gives up.
 - » Players decide what answer is right: It is important that players be allowed to act whatever they interpret from the card. If the card has a “banana” pictured on it, but the actor is trying to have people guess the word “yellow”, that is certainly okay. It does not really matter what was guessed, as long as the actor is happy with the answer. We can also celebrate when the children remember how the prompt was written in the book!
4. Once the charade has been guessed, the card is placed at the bottom of the pile, and play moves to the next actor. Play continues until everyone has had enough fun for the day!
5. Incorporate the repeated phrase from the book between rounds to remind children how compost comes from these parts, “Just add to the pot and let it all rot into Compost Stew!”

It is *not* recommended to play with teams and timers at this age, neither for points or competition. The main goal is children being imaginative, having fun, and engaging with information about composting. Everyone can play together on the same team.”

ENGAGE THE CHILDREN

Engage children to help develop language, teamwork, non-verbal interpretation, and creative thinking skills.

1. Ask children about what they are doing.
2. Ask children to provide explanations.
3. Ask children the following questions to help them make the connection from their lives to the farm.
 - » What is composting? (It is using leftover food and other organic matter to rot and be eaten and excreted by worms to add nutrients to soil to help plants grow.)
 - » What do sweet potato plants need to grow? (soil, water, sun, space)
 - » What do plants get from soil? (structure to stand upright, water to hydrate the plant, and nutrients from composted parts)

grass



dirt



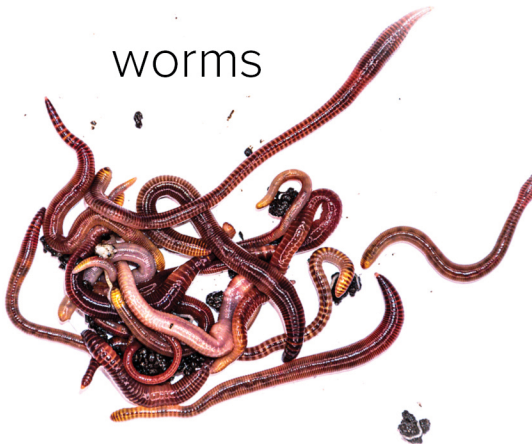
egg shells



sticks/twigs



worms



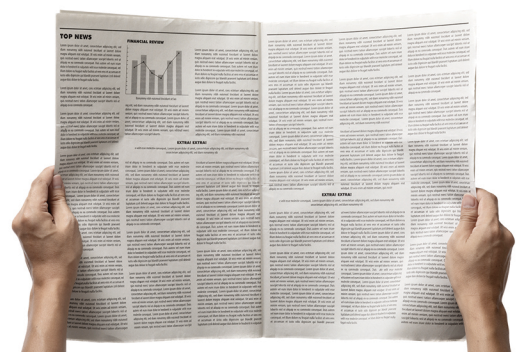
food scraps



jack-o'-lanterns



paper



TEACHER SCRIPT FOR FARM STORY WITH PROPS

INSTRUCTIONS

Read the story and have children follow along with the photos on the front of this page. Use the circle time activity props to enhance the experience.

- To grow new sweet potatoes, farmers start by “bedding” sweet potatoes in soil. They are placed flat with the soil reaching about halfway up the sides. With time, water, and sunlight, sprouts will grow from the bedded sweet potatoes. These sprouts are called “slips.”
- Slips are gently removed, along with their roots, from the original sweet potato and transplanted into the ground where they have more space to grow, such as in a garden or field. Leaves grow into long vines and root tubers enlarge as they store edible starch material.
- Sweet potato plants soak up sunlight, water, and nutrients from the soil for three to four months (90-120 days) as they grow and mature.
- Leaves begin to yellow and dry up when the sweet potatoes underground are mature and are almost ready for harvest. Farmers cut or mow the plant leaves and vines off the plant so the sweet potato skins thicken before harvest, handling, and transport.
- Farm workers dig or use tractors pulling digger machines that travel underneath the soil and lift the sweet potatoes to the surface. Field workers follow behind, selecting and sorting the sweet potatoes for storage, either to grow slips for the next year’s crop or to send to supermarkets and sweet potato processing facilities.
- Potatoes are placed in crates and transported by trucks to their destinations. We eat sweet potatoes cooked whole, mashed, as fries and tots, or in other recipes!



CIRCLE TIME PROPS

Ahead of the activity, gather classroom items as props and/or cut and glue the included images to popsicle sticks. Distribute the props before you read the story and have children act out the story with the props. Practice sequencing: when children hear their item called, they would stand in order at the front of the room with the teacher.



FARM STORY

SWEET POTATOES

Learn more about how sweet potatoes start as slips and grow to arrive in your hands!



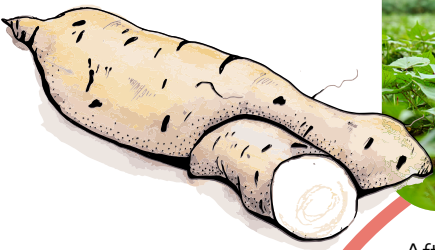
Farmers “bed” sweet potatoes in soil and give them time, water, and sunlight.



Sprouts called “slips” begin to grow. Slips with roots are gently removed from sweet potatoes and are transplanted into fields.



After vines grow long and roots widen into mature sweet potato tubers, leaves begin to yellow and dry up.



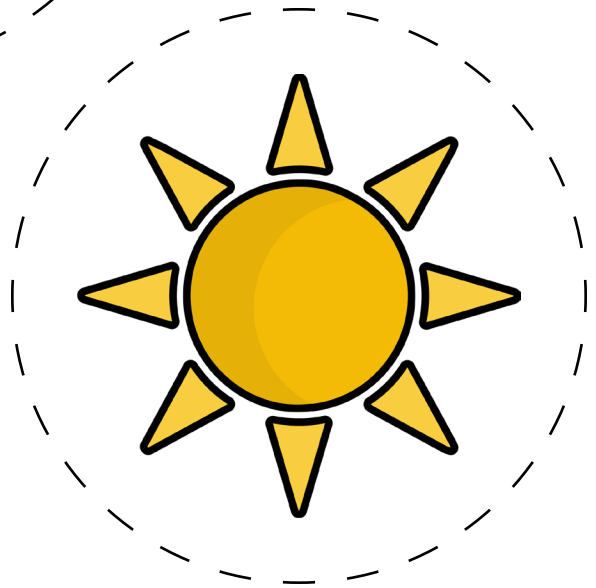
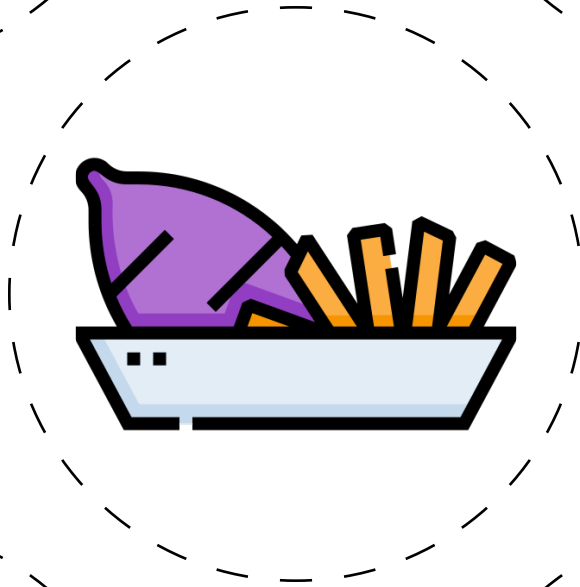
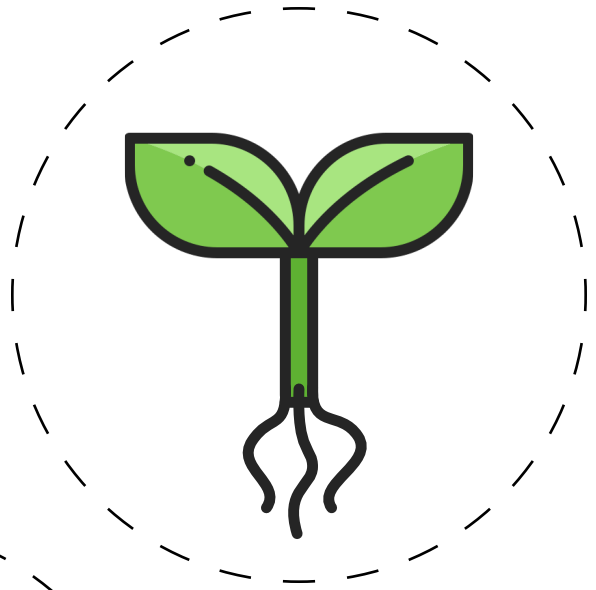
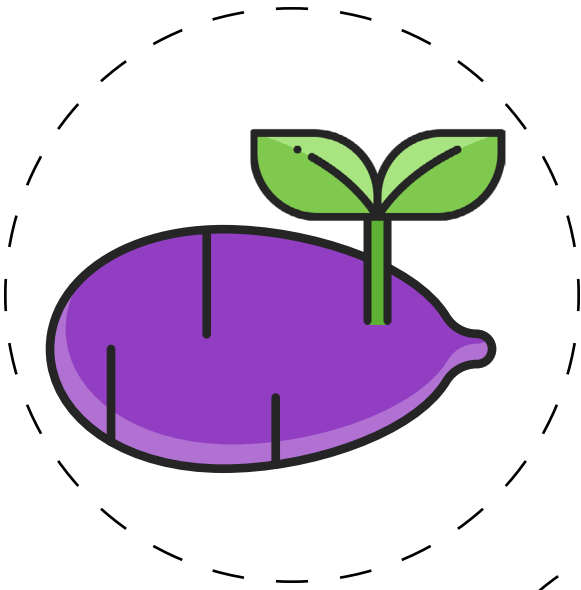
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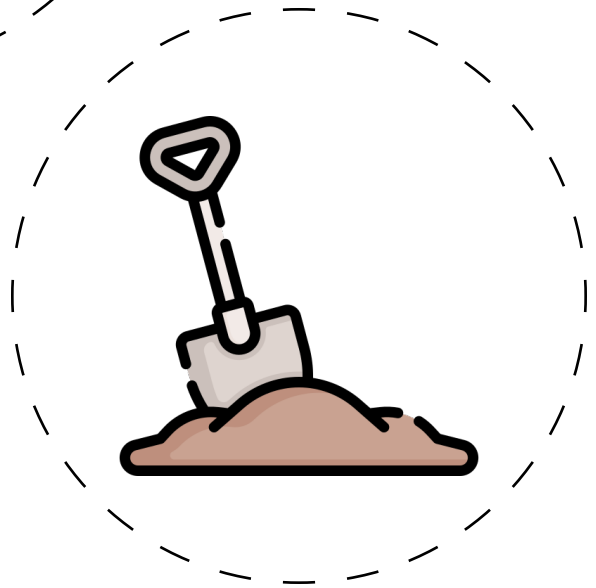
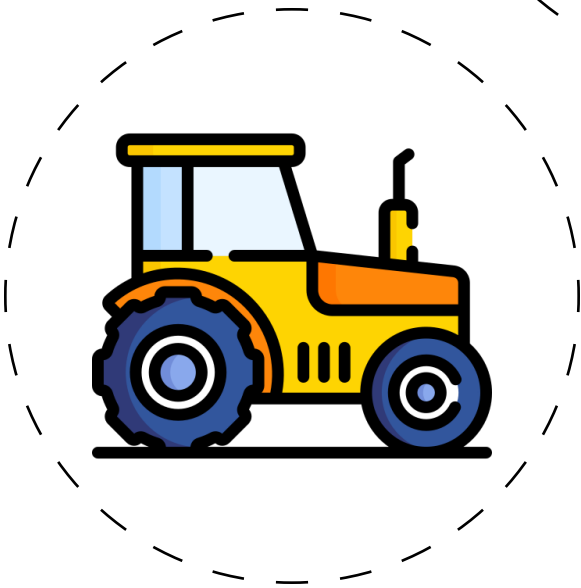
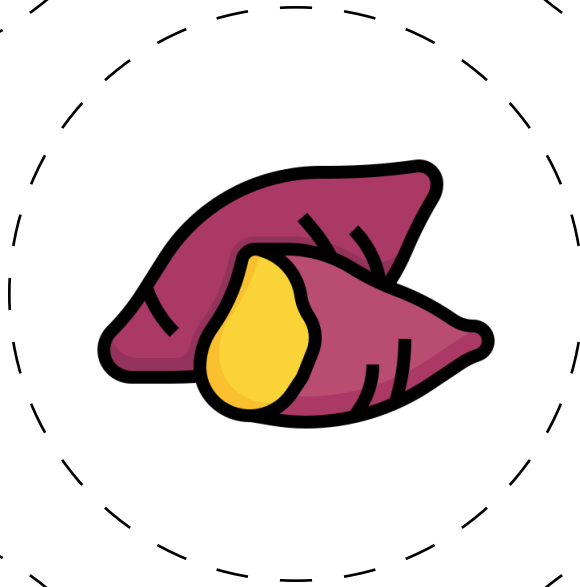
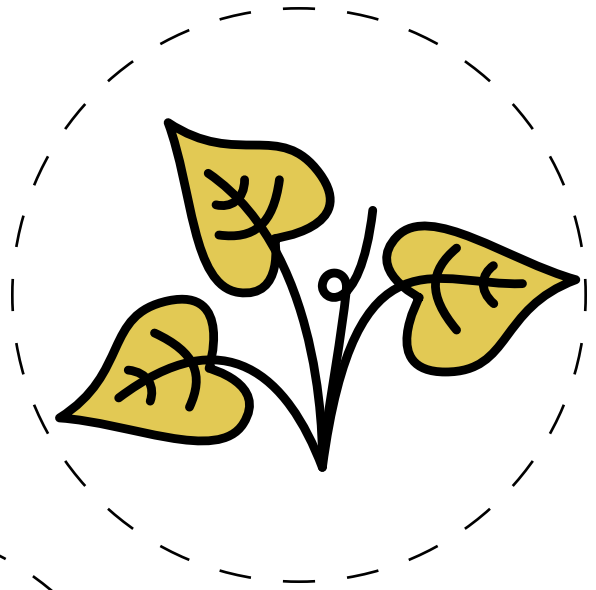


Tractors cut off plant tops with mowers and turn sweet potatoes onto the top of the ground with digger machines.



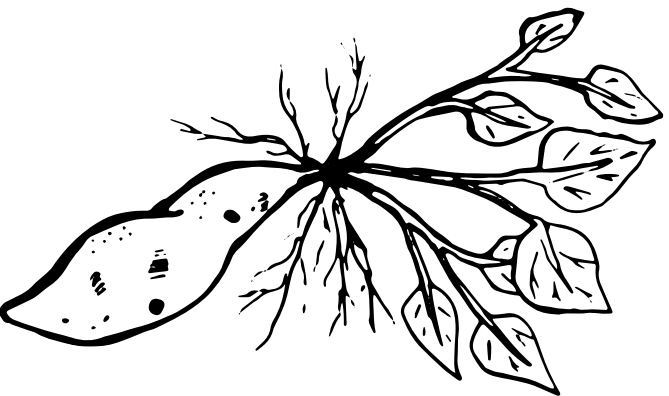
Farm workers sort sweet potatoes into crates, and trucks carry the crates of sweet potatoes.





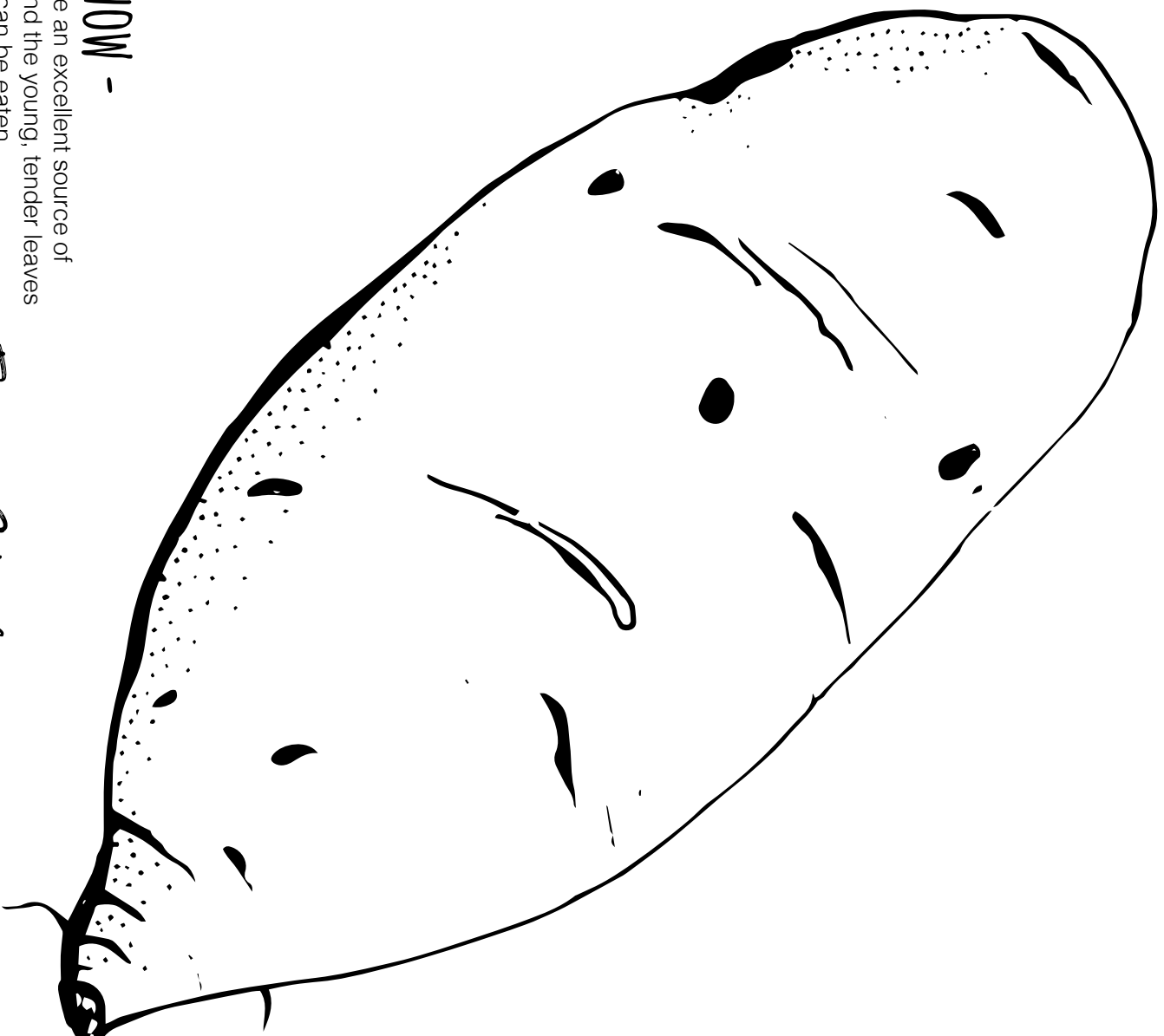
Harvest of the Month

SWEET POTATOES



DID YOU KNOW -

Sweet potatoes are an excellent source of vitamin A and C and the young, tender leaves of a sweet potato can be eaten.



Farm to School
NEBRASKA



NEBRASKA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION