Harvest Leaf Prints

Let your students make colorful leaf books to remember fall leaves long after they've faded away. Have students bring in an assortment of leaves. (Plan this activity before leaves on the ground have dried up.) Let students examine the leaves and sort them by attributes. For example, look at the leaf edges and classify the leaves the way scientists often do: as smooth, wavy, toothed, or lobed. Next, place leaves one at a time on a square of cardboard, and tape a piece of lightweight paper over them. Have students rub gently over the leaves with a crayon, moving it back and forth until the shape and veins of the leaf appear on the paper. Let each student make four to six leaf rubbings and staple them together to make a leaf-rubbing book.

Add Two Parts Fish

Native Americans who lived near the ocean often added fish to the soil as fertilizer. Help your students conduct an experiment to learn why they did this. You will need two clean 2-liter soda bottles, potting soil, one can of tuna fish, plastic straws (or other inorganic matter), and apple cores (or other organic materials). Here’s what to do:

⊙ Cut each soda bottle off at the center.
⊙ Place several scoops of potting soil in one bottle so it is half full.
⊙ Add organic matter, such as a chunk of tuna and a slice of apple, to the soil.
⊙ Add inorganic matter, such as a plastic straw.
⊙ Flip over the second bottle. Force it over the bottom bottle to form a lid. Tape the two together with clear packing tape.
⊙ Watch the soil for several months. Over time, the organic materials will change, return to the soil, and enrich it. The inorganic materials will remain unchanged.

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Dry and Nibble Harvest Necklaces

Long ago, Pilgrims dried some foods to keep them from going bad. Let your students experiment with drying foods as they make these tasty necklace treats. Here’s how:

- Give each student a small paper cup filled with pumpkin seeds, raisins, and corn (from a bag of frozen corn). Let students taste each of the foods. Then give them each about 2-3 feet of thread and large needles. (Talk about safety issues and make sure there is plenty of space between each student.) Have them string the foods to make a necklace, creating patterns if they like.

- Cover cookie sheets with foil and spread students’ necklaces on them. (Most will look alike; use the dull side of a needle to etch students’ names on the foil inside their necklaces.)

- Bake the necklaces in a 250°F oven until they have dried, about one hour.

Cranberry Sink and Float

Cranberries are a traditional Thanksgiving food. Let children learn more about these tiny fruits with a simple experiment. Give everyone a fresh cranberry. Ask children to describe their cranberries. You might list words on chart paper as children suggest them. Next, have children predict whether their cranberries will sink or float and explain their reasoning. Let students test their predictions by placing their cranberries in the water. Follow up by cutting cranberries in half to reveal air pockets inside. Guide children to understand that the air pockets prevent the cranberries from sinking. (For more information, see Tip, left.)

Let children use the cranberry halves like stamps to make prints on paper. You might have them fold white paper to make cards, then use the cranberry stamps to decorate the front. Use the cards as invitations to a class Thanksgiving celebration. (See Thanksgiving Feast, page 26.) They can do the same thing on smaller pieces of paper to make place cards.

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Place necklaces on paper towels to cool. Let students discuss how the heat from the oven changed the foods. Invite them to taste the dried foods. How did drying change their taste?

Adapted from *ScienceArt* by Deborah Schecter (Scholastic Professional Books, 1997).

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**Harvest Beginnings**

Without seeds there would be no harvest! Discuss the idea that much of the food we eat comes from plants that begin as seeds. Show students a can of corn, and ask them to tell where corn seeds come from. Hold up an ear of Indian corn. Help children identify the kernels and the cob as parts of the corn plant. Then let them pick kernels from the cob. Explain that these are seeds. Next, display a commercial packet of corn seeds and kernels of popcorn. Explain that all three are the kernels, or seeds, of a corn plant. Let students closely examine the three kinds of seeds, then follow these steps to plant them.

- Give each child three recloseable sandwich bags and paper towels, and two of each seed.
- Instruct students to fold the paper towels until they are small enough to fit in the bags.
- Have them wet the paper towels completely and slide one into each bag.
- Have students drop two of each type of seed into a bag and seal it.
- Using clear tape, attach the sandwich bags to a sunny window in the classroom. (Use permanent marker to write students’ names on their bags first.)
- Add water as needed to keep the paper towels and seeds moist. Watch what happens!

**Ann Flagg**

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**Tip**

Many children will be familiar with the name Squanto. Help children learn more about how Squanto helped the Pilgrims find food to survive in their new home. For example, Squanto taught the Pilgrims to plant corn and to use herring to fertilize the ground. He also showed the Pilgrims how to gather nuts and berries, and how to fish.