

Traditional Gardening in Alaska

By Aimee Littlejohn and Chris O'Neil, Noatak

Materials

- Garden spot & tools
- Seeds, plants

Objectives

To give students an introduction to agriculture through gardening and gathering, and help them determine its significance in the culture where they live.

Suggested grade levels

9-12

Alaska Content Standards

History B1b

Science A15

Culture C1, D1

(see details in text)



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mation, visit

www.agclassroom.org/ak or

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Essential Question: *How does knowing Noatak's agricultural history help plan and grow a garden in the Arctic?*

Introduction

Planning and growing a community garden with the assistance of Elders gives students a way not only to connect to the land, but their heritage and the culture in which they are being raised. While this particular project was designed for village students, it could be adapted to any area, using experienced local gardeners and gatherers as experts.

Background

Gardening is a traditional form of agriculture for most cultures, but its application and significance vary greatly among people from different areas. Students will look at the value of agriculture on a community level, as well as gathering.

Procedures

1. Students begin researching the history of local agriculture including subsistence gathering. Books and the Internet have vast amounts of information but local Elders provide excellent resources.
2. Students will conduct detailed interviews with Elders about local agriculture (small scale gardens), traditional gathering, local harvested favorites, traditional preserving techniques, and any stories that are beneficial to the project. If the Elder has information pertaining to specific things successfully grown, this would be great information to gather. Students are to investigate any community interest in agriculture.
3. After interviews with Elders, students search what has been grown successfully in the region or similar climatic areas. Students should conduct an interest survey for a community garden. Suggestions for what to grow should be taken into consideration when planning the garden. Students should create a graphic organizer compiling all data.
4. Then the fun step, students will begin planning the community garden. During the extensive planning of the garden make time for Elders to come in and share about local gathering traditions. Plan several summer time "gathering field trips" with Elders, students, and others interested in the project. Indoor experiments such as growing under lights and early seed starting, should begin in early spring before the snow is all melted.
5. Summer is time for planting and harvesting. Field trips for "gathering" should be planned according to the local gathering schedule. Students "harvest" summer

through beginning of fall. Students record and display data from all harvests and gathering trips.

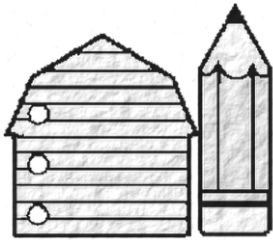
Discussion Points

As nomadic lifestyles gave way to seasonal then permanent villages, how did the roles of growing and gathering change?

In a culture where food needs can be purchased, what is the value of gardening and of gathering?

Follow-up Activities

- Students explore preserving techniques further
- Students plan a traditional potlatch to celebrate harvest
- Students conduct a survey to determine the value of continuing the garden as a community project, and what crops were most popular.
- Students plan a second-year garden based on public input and data recorded from harvest and gathering trips.



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NOTE: To help with cost of project, plan in advance, fundraisers, write letters or send emails for donations, write a grant, or find sponsors. Create a realistic and flexible budget.

Resources

- UAF Cooperative Extension Service- Dr. Roseann Leiner
- Local wild plant book(s): Nauriat Niginaqtuat
- Local Biologist or grower- Chris O’Neil
- Internet: Mostly seed sites and local growers’ sites
- Interviews with Elders
- Mushroom Identification Books

Content Standards

- History B1b- human communities and their relationships with climate, subsistence base, resources, geography, and technology.
- Science A15-use science to understand and describe the local environment.

Cultural Standards:

- Students C1-perform subsistence activities in ways that are appropriate to local cultural traditions
- D1-acquire in-depth cultural knowledge through active participation and meaningful interaction with elders.
- Educators A3-provide opportunity and time for students to learn in setting where local cultural knowledge and skills are naturally relevant
- B1-regularly engage students in appropriate projects and experiential learning activities in the surrounding environment

Aimee Littlejohn is a teacher at Northwest Arctic Borough’s Napaaqtugmiut School in Noatak; Chris O’Neil is a biologist.

Scoring Rubric for Traditional Gardening

Standard	No Evidence	Emerging	Proficient	Advanced
History B1b	Students don't help to distribute information	Students use minimal technology to distribute information	Students create handouts to distribute to the community	Using technology, students display "Harvest/Gathering" totals
Science A15	Students don't participate in knowledge sharing	Participates minimally in knowledge sharing	Participates actively in knowledge sharing	Students plan and host a village gathering and share "harvest" information
Cultural: Students C1	Do not attend field trips	Attend 1 field trip	Attend 2 field trips	Attend minimum of 3 or more scheduled "gathering field trips"
Students D1	Do not complete interview	Completed an interview	Completed an interview and shared information with class	Completed 2 detailed interviews with an Elder, shared info with class
Educators A3	Doesn't attend field trips or participate in knowledge sharing	Attend 1 field trip or participated in knowledge sharing	Attends 2-3 field trips and participate in knowledge sharing	Attend and participate in information gathering/sharing as well as all scheduled field trips
Educators B1	Doesn't encourage knowledge sharing with community	Encourages knowledge sharing	Helps plan the distribution of knowledge to the community	Aid students in distributing knowledge from harvests to the community hosts a potluck with fixings from garden