

Berries, Nuts and Seeds

This time of year we start to see plants with ripening berries, nuts, and seeds that are a great



food source for animals. There are even some that people can eat, but not all. Exploring the "fruits" of the year can bring great fun.

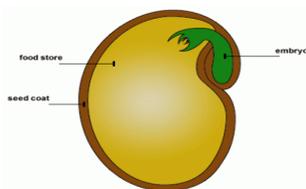
Fruits may be juicy, tough, or have hard shells.



The outer covering acts as protection for the seed, keeping it safe from heat, cold, too much or too little moisture. Bright fruit colors may help attract the ani-

mals to eat them, and eventually spread the seeds to a suitable growing environment.

Seeds are made up of three basic parts. The



seed coat is the outer covering that helps protect the seed. It may be surrounded with a fleshy substance. One example is an apple, with seeds in the center of the fruit. There is a food store that is used by the embryo inside the seed. The embryo is the young plant that is waiting for all of the right conditions to germinate.



So let's explore some of the local flora that you may encounter. Winterberry is coming into color now. They are the size of a pea and bright



pink-red. The berries will stay on the plants into the winter, providing a food source for birds, deer, mice, and bears.

Sumac plants are often seen growing along open hillsides, trail edges, grassland, and along roadsides. As the berries ripen, they go from a fuzzy green cluster to a dark red.



Hickory trees can be found in our forests. Sometimes they are next

to oak trees as the young hickory trees like shade, while the older trees prefer sunny areas. In the fall, the dark hickory shells split open and the nuts fall out.

They are often eaten by grosbeaks, turkeys, woodpeckers, squirrels, deer, woodchucks, raccoons, and people.



Jewelweed belongs to the Touch-me-not family. They like to grow in wet, shady places, often near poison ivy.

As the seeds ripen, the pods burst open when touched. The juice from the stem can be rubbed on a poison ivy rash to help healing.



Books about Berries, Nuts and Seeds

Here are some books to learn more about what animals leave behind:

A Fruit is a Suitcase for Seeds by Jean Richards

Let's Go Nuts!: Seeds We Eat by April Pulley Sayre

How Does a Seed Grow? by Sue Kim

More Blueberries! by Susan Musgrave

Glenna's Seeds by Nancy Edwards

In the Garden by Elizabeth Spurr

Flip, Float, Fly: Seeds on the Move by JoAnn Macken

One Bean by Anne Rockwell

Seeds! Seeds! Seeds! by Nancy Wallace

From Seed to Plant by Gail Gibbons

The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear by Don Wood

Eco Explorers

Preschool-Kindergarten

Mobile Outreach

4524 East 49th Street
Cuyahoga Heights, OH
(216) 341-1707

Ecoexplorers@
clevelandmetroparks.com

Berries, Nuts and Seeds Activities and Crafts

Seeds We Eat

Investigate common fruits and vegetables that we eat to see where the seeds are and if we eat them. Some seeds are more obvious than others. How many foods do we eat that have seeds? Pull out nuts and seeds that they know are seeds, then start looking at fruits and vegetables to decide which ones have seeds that we eat. Of course you can taste them too! Here is a list to start:

Corn	Pumpkin Seeds
Sunflower Seeds	Walnuts
Almonds	Pecans
Peanuts	Cashews
Sugar Snap Peas	Cucumbers
Green Beans	Tomatoes
Grapes	Kiwi
Bananas	Berries
Zucchini	

After checking all of these out, talk about the fruits and vegetables that have seeds that we do not eat (fruits with pits, apples, oranges, peppers, etc). Ask why some are ok to eat while others are not.



Fingerpainting Berries

Talk about what kind of berries the children like to eat. You'll probably get a list including strawberries, raspberries, grapes, blueberries, etc. Discuss where different berries can grow - on the ground, on the vine, on a bush and which grow where. Ask the children if they can eat all types of berries they see/find. Explain that only berries that we buy at the grocery store or specifically grow in our garden can be eaten. The other berries are for the animals to eat. Talk about which animals like to eat berries - birds, bears, coyotes, squirrels, deer, mice, box turtles, etc.

Get out some finger paints and let them make some berry projects. See below for some ideas...



Activities for Further Learning and Fun

Seed Songs and Poems

I'm A Nut

C

I'm an a - corn, small and round, Ly - ing on the
Called my - self on the tel - e - phone, Just to hear my
Took my - self to the mo - vie theater, Stayed too late and

3 G7 C

cold, cold ground, Ev - 'ry - one walks o - ver me,
gold - en tone, Asked me out for a lit - tle date,
said, "Let's go." Took my hand and led me out,

6 G7 C

That is why I'm cracked, you see. I'm a nut! (click, click) I'm a
Picked me up 'bout half past eight.
Drove me home and gave a shout!

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nut! (click, click) I'm a nut! (click, click)



Berries, Nuts and Seed Snacks

Yogurt Berry Fruit Pizzas

Using mini pancakes and vanilla yogurt and an assortment of seasonal berries, let the children make their own berry pizzas.

Berry Popsicles

Fill popsicle containers with cut up strawberries, raspberries and blueberries. Pour apple juice, lemonade, white grape juice or another juice of choice into the containers, leaving a little room at the top for the lid. Freeze until solid and Enjoy!

Yogurt Frozen Berries

Line a large baking sheet with wax paper. Rinse, drain and pat dry berries then dip each berry into the yogurt to coat it using a toothpick. Transfer to wax paper and freeze once all berries have been thoroughly coated (a second toothpick is useful in helping to transfer berries from stick to wax paper).

Once frozen, remove from wax paper and seal in container in freezer or consume on the spot.

Roasted Pumpkin Seeds

Boil the pumpkin seeds in water for 5 minutes. Drain well. Sprinkle with salt or seasoned salt. Place a thin layer on a cookie sheet. Bake at 250 degrees. Stir after 30 minutes. Bake 1/2-1 hour more or until crunchy.

Plants

Tune: The Farmer in the Dell

The farmer plants the seeds
The farmer plants the seeds
Hi, Ho and Cherry O
The farmer plants the seeds

Other Variations:
The rain begins to fall
The sun begins to shine
The plants begin to grow
The buds all open up
The flowers smile at me

