



4-H VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SERIES

N e b r a s k a 4 - H Y o u t h D e v e l o p m e n t

Club Activity Idea: The Three Sisters

Outcome Area: __ SET X Healthy Lifestyles __ Life Skills __ Career Development

Curriculum Area: Environmental Education & Earth Sciences/Plant Science

Specific Project (s): 4-H Project Manuals-See *Them Sprout*; *Let's Get Growing*; *Take Your Pick*

Description of Activity: Use an Indian legend to teach gardening and making nutritious food choices.

Age Level: 5 -10 years

Group Size: flexible

Time Involved: Preparation time: 10 minutes Activity time: 15 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Handouts explaining Native American Legend
- Snack Size Plastic Zipper Bags
- Markers
- 100% Cotton Ball
- Bowls with small amount of water
- Corn Seeds (may use popcorn kernels)
- Squash Seeds
- Pole Bean Seeds
- Scissors
- Yarn
- Stapler

Activity:

1. Go over the handout explaining the Native American Legend of the Three Sisters.
2. Give each child a plastic zipper bag and marker to write their name on the bag.
3. Give each child a cotton ball. Moisten the cotton by dipping it in a bowl of water and squeezing it out, leaving it damp but not dripping wet.
4. Place cotton ball in the plastic zipper bag and one of each of the following seeds: corn, squash and pole bean. Zip closed.
5. Cut yarn to necklace length. Staple to the plastic zipper bag on each side, forming a necklace.



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6. Child can wear the necklace around their neck while at the meeting or school. Once they get home, it should be hung in a window to take advantage of the sun's warmth.
7. This necklace provides a greenhouse environment (moisture from the cotton ball and heat for the seeds to germinate) that allows the seeds to grow. This process takes 5 to 10 days. Once the plants have a good root system, plant them gently in the soil. Plant in a triangle shape 10 to 12 inches apart. Make sure they have plenty of sun and keep them watered until they are well established.
8. Enjoy watching your plants grow and harvesting your garden produce.
9. The following recipes provide a salad for immediate tasting of the planted produce or a succotash to be made when the garden is harvested.

The Legend of the Three Sisters

Native Americans planted corn, beans and squash together. They were called the three beautiful sisters because they grow in the same mound in the garden and each provides help to the others. The corn plant grows tall so that the bean vines can climb up the corn plant, reaching towards the sun. The bean plant provides a necessary nutrient (nitrogen) to help the other plants grow. The squash plant spreads out over the ground, keeping everyone's roots moist and cool.

The Native American story of the Three Sisters varies from tribe to tribe. The following account is from "Indian Legends of Eastern Canada."

The Three Sisters

A long time ago there were three sisters who lived together in a field.

These sisters were quite different from one another in their size and way of dressing.

The little sister was so young that she could only crawl at first, and she was dressed in green.

The second sister wore a bright yellow dress, and she had a way of running off by herself when the sun shone and the soft wind blew in her face.

The third was the eldest sister, standing always very straight and tall above the other sisters and trying to protect them. She wore a pale green shawl, and she had long, yellow hair that tossed about her head in the breeze.

There was one way the sisters were alike, though. They loved each other dearly, and they always stayed together. This made them very strong.

One day a stranger came to the field of the Three Sisters—a Mohawk boy. He talked to the birds and other animals. This caught the attention of the three sisters.

Late that summer, the youngest and smallest sister disappeared. Her sisters were sad.

Again, the Mohawk boy came to the field to gather reeds at the water's edge. The two sisters who were left watched his moccasin trail, and that night the second sister, the one in the yellow dress disappeared as well.

Now the eldest sister was the only one left.

She continued to stand tall in her field. When the Mohawk boy saw that she missed her sisters, he brought them back together and they became stronger together,

Three Sisters Recipes

Bean, Corn and Zucchini Salad

1 bunch of scallions, thinly sliced
1 ½ cup fresh green beans
into bite sized pieces
½ cup carrot coins

1 bunch flat leaf parsley, chopped
3 small zucchini, diced
2 cups canned corn, drained
1 green pepper, chopped

Dressing

1/3 cup vinegar
1/3cup extra virgin olive oil
5 tablespoons of sugar

Mix vinegar, olive oil and sugar together and pour over the vegetables. Chill and enjoy!

Autumn Harvest Succotash

2 cups fresh green beans, cut into 1" pieces
4 Tablespoons butter
6 ears of corn kernels
1 small yellow squash, sliced into coins

½ teaspoons salt
pepper to taste
paprika
chopped parsley

1. Cook green beans in a small amount of water until tender. Drain and reserve the cooking water.
2. In a saucepan, melt butter. Add corn kernels, squash and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Add enough reserved cooking water to cover the vegetables.
3. Cook gently for 3 minutes.
4. Turn the heat to low and cook, without stirring, until most of the liquid is cooked down. About 5 to 10 minutes.
5. Season with pepper, pour into a serving dish and add parsley and paprika. Serve immediately.

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