

Grow Your Own Salsa



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- Describe at least three benefits of growing fruits and vegetables.
- Name four principles of gardening.
- Describe at least three recipes that incorporate tomatoes, jalapeño peppers, and cilantro.

MATERIALS

- Potting soil
- 12-inch pots or empty 1-gallon plastic milk, water, or juice containers (three pots or containers per participant)
- Small tomato plants
- Small jalapeño pepper plants
- Cilantro seeds
- A gardening trowel
- Plastic gloves, if desired
- A container of water
- A dry-erase board or large sheets of paper
- Markers
- The *Pico de Gallo* recipe handout (p. H – 9)



PREPARATION

1. Ask your local nursery or garden center to donate the potting soil, pots, plants, seeds, and gardening trowel. As an alternative, you can purchase these materials or ask the store manager to sell them at a reduced cost.
2. If you decide to use empty, 1-gallon plastic beverage containers instead of pots, simply cut the top off of each container, leaving enough depth for a mature plant to grow. Punch three small holes in the bottom of each container for drainage.

3. Set up five gardening stations:
 - At station one, place the potting soil, pots or containers, gardening trowel, and plastic gloves.
 - At station two, place the small tomato plants.
 - At station three, place the small jalapeño pepper plants.
 - At station four, place the cilantro seeds.
 - At station five, place a container of water.
4. Photocopy the *Pico de Gallo* recipe for each participant.



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Begin by asking participants about their experiences growing fruits and vegetables. Discuss the benefits of growing fruits and vegetables. Benefits may include having access to fresh fruits and vegetables; growing food organically; and enjoying time together with family members as everyone participates in the gardening process. On the board or sheets of paper, write the benefits of growing fruits and vegetables for the class to see. Encourage the participants to identify additional benefits of growing their own fruits and vegetables. Write the additional benefits for the class to see.

2. Discuss four important principles of gardening:
 - Provide enough soil for the plants.
 - Provide enough sunlight for the plants.
 - Provide adequate water for the plants.
 - Fertilize the plants, as needed.

Write the gardening principles for the class to see.

3. Assemble the participants at station one, and have each participant select three pots or containers and fill them with soil to about 2 inches from the top.
 - At station two, have each participant plant a small tomato plant in one pot or container.
 - At station three, have each participant plant a small jalapeño pepper plant in another pot or container.
 - At station four, have each participant plant cilantro seeds in the remaining pot or container according to the seed packet instructions.
 - At station five, have each participant gently water their plants and seeds.
4. At the end of the lesson, ask participants to share ways in which they would use their tomatoes, jalapeño peppers, and cilantro in the meals and snacks they prepare at home. Write the suggestions for the class to see. Distribute the *Pico de Gallo* recipe to participants to reinforce the use of their newly planted produce.
5. Encourage participants to take their potted plants home and place them outside, if weather permits. You can also encourage them to grow fruits and vegetables in pots, in their yards, or in their community gardens. To find a community garden near you, visit www.communitygarden.org. Share this Web site with your participants.

Expansion Ideas

GROW YOUR OWN SALAD BOWL

Make a salad bowl by growing the items you would use in a salad such as lettuce, tomatoes, green onions, and bell peppers.

GARDEN FRESH HERBS

Create an herb garden in a strawberry pot by planting oregano, parsley, cilantro, mint, rosemary, and other herbs. Use these herbs to dress up healthy recipes.