



Grow It, Try It, Like It!

Preschool Fun With Fruits and Vegetables

Spinach Lane



Booklet **3**

Welcome to... Spinach Lane at Tasty Acres Farm!

Cool, crispy leaves of spinach flutter in the gentle breeze at Spinach Lane. It almost looks as if the leaves are waving a welcome hello an invitation to stop and learn more about spinach. In this unit, the children learn that spinach is a vegetable. They experience the look, feel, smell, and taste of spinach leaves. Spinach grows quickly and hands-on planting activities help children see how seeds produce these flavorful plants. Grow some spinach and have a harvest. See how bunches of spinach go from the farm to the store and farmers' market. Leave time to tempt the taste buds with spinach dips, salads, and more tasty options. Growing at Home materials encourage families to include spinach often in cooking, conversations, and fun and games.

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A Plan For Organizing Spinach Lane Activities

Check with local farms and farmers' markets to find out when spinach is in peak season. Seeing spinach growing in the field makes a great farm field trip for preschoolers. If a farm is not nearby, visit a produce stand or farmers' market to see fresh spinach.



Most activities require only 10-15 minutes; pick a few for each day. In this example, all of the activities from the lesson plans are completed, but spaced out over a 5-day period.

The Spinach Lane lesson plans are designed to be used in their entirety but if your center does not have the time, space, or resources to do all the activities, select the activities from Section A: hands-on activities, Section B: planting activities, Section C: spinach stories and songs, and Section D: nutrition education activities. Be sure that the activities you choose help the children meet the objectives listed at the beginning of each lesson plan section.

Here is one way to arrange the activities in Spinach Lane. Most activities require only 10-15 minutes; pick a few for each day. If possible, do the planting activities and harvest a crop of spinach. It is an easy vegetable to grow and is ready in about 40 days. In this example, all of the activities from the lesson plans are completed, but spaced out over a 5-day period. Additionally, two activities from the Garden Art and Crafts Section in Booklet 1, are added. These activities are fun and useful ways to help reinforce the objectives of each activity. On page 19, it gives tips for creating successful projects and ideas for harvesting fun month after month. The Garden Art and Crafts chart connects the art and crafts to the lesson activities.

Planning Chart for Spinach Lane Activities

Day One	Day Two	Day Three	Day Four	Day Five
A1 One Touch, One Guess Hands-on Activity 	B1 Spinach Starts as Seeds Planting Activity	C1 Cool Puppy Pup Video	B3 Plant Seeds or a Seed Tape Outdoors Planting Activity 	D1 Let Us Try More Leafy Greens Nutrition Education Activity
A2 Spinach Leaf Print Hands-on Activity	A3 Spinach Flowers Hands-on Activity	B2 Plant a Spinach Seed Planting Activity 	Finish Garden Craft project, if necessary	D2 Say Hip, Hip, Hooray for Spinach Nutrition Education Activity 
Garden Art Bookmarks 	Finish Garden Art project, if necessary	Garden Craft or Make a Seed Tape 	C3 Old MacDonald Had a Farm Song, Spinach Style 	C2 Reading Activity 
Send Home Growing at Home Materials #1	C3 Old MacDonald Had a Farm Song, Spinach Style	Send Home Growing at Home Materials #2	C2 Reading Activity	Send Home Growing at Home Materials #3

Revisit the Farm: Rainy Day Fun All Year Long

When the weather changes your outdoor plans, the activities from Tasty Acres Farm provide a welcome opportunity to revisit and remember all the fun and flavor of *Grow It, Try It, Like It!* Sing the songs, watch the video segments, and use the Garden Art and Crafts Section in Booklet I for ideas. Make a rainy day one to reconnect with these fruits and vegetables.

More Ways To Grow – The Spinach Lane unit can be included in other areas of the curriculum.

Complementary themes include:

Foods – Vegetables **Colors** – Green **Seasons** Spring **Body** – Senses

Dinosaurs – Plant Eaters **Plants** – Leaves, Stems **Alphabet** – S words



A. An Adventure Stems From Learning About Spinach Hands-on Activities

Materials Needed

- Fresh spinach leaves
- Mystery Box/Bag
- Paper and pencil
- Feather

What To Do Ahead of Time

- Wash spinach leaves, at least three leaves per student. Reserve at least one pre-washed leaf per child for tasting.
- Place a handful of spinach leaves in the Mystery Box/ Bag. Keep the remainder out of the sight of children, but have available in case 'enthusiastic feelers' damage the leaves in the box and more are needed.
- Make copies of Spinach Growing at Home #1—one set per child.
- Review Make a Mystery Box or Bag, as needed (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 45).

Growing at Home Introduction Letter and Hand Washing and Polite Tasting Guidelines: Send a copy of these resources home before starting the first unit from *Grow It, Try It, Like It!* (See Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, pages 42-44.)

Spinach Growing at Home #1: Send a copy of this resource home with each child at the start of the Section A activities. If you have already sent these resources home you may omit this step.

A1: One Touch, One Guess

Use the Mystery Box/Bag to create interest by having the children feel spinach leaves before revealing the "mystery" item to them.

Objectives

The children will be able to:

- Identify spinach as a lightweight, green leaf vegetable;
- Describe the appearance, smell, and taste of spinach.

Before the Activity—Hand Washing and Polite Tasting

- Explain that we should always wash our hands before preparing and eating food. Have the children wash their hands (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 43, for directions).
- If this is the first activity involving food tasting, talk with the children about polite food tasting habits (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 44 for details).



Activity Length:
15 minutes

The Activity

- Introduce or reintroduce the Mystery Box/Bag, if you have used it before.
- One at a time, ask each child to come and feel inside the box or bag without looking. If a child seems afraid, feel inside the box/bag with the child.
- Ask each child to describe quietly to you what he/she feels.
- After everyone has guessed, reveal the spinach. Show the spinach to the children.
- Note the children's guesses that were close (leaves, a plant, food) or correct (spinach).
- Offer each child a clean leaf of spinach to look at, touch, and smell.
- Talk about spinach. Ask the questions below and any other questions you like.
 - ▶ Is spinach a fruit or a vegetable? (Vegetable)
 - ▶ What color is it? (Green)
 - ▶ Do the leaves feel thick or thin? (Thin)
 - ▶ How does the outside of it feel? (Smooth and bumpy)
 - ▶ Is the spinach leaf light or heavy? (Very light like a feather –let children feel the feather)
 - ▶ Is it soft or hard? (Soft like the leaf from a tree)
 - ▶ Is the stem on the spinach leaf thick or thin? (Thin)
 - ▶ Has anyone ever tasted a spinach leaf? (Yes or no)
 - ▶ When you bite or tear the spinach leaf, what color do you see inside? (Green)
- If the children are fond of dinosaurs, ask what kind of dinosaurs might eat spinach (Plant Eaters).

Words To Grow

Leaf or leaves	Stem
Vegetable	Light (weight)
Green	Smooth
Bumpy	



Connection to Garden Art and Crafts

Garden Bookmark: Have the children make spinach decorated Garden Bookmarks. Trace around a baby spinach leaf on a bookmark. Then, hold the leaf over the image with a piece of plastic wrap and rub the plastic over the leaf with the round end of wooden craft stick (see Booklet 1, Garden Art and Crafts Section, page 28).

Activity Conclusion – Tasting

- Conclude the lesson by inviting the children to taste the spinach leaf.
- Ask the children
 - ▶ Is the leaf soft or chewy? (Chewy)
 - ▶ How does the spinach taste? (Mild)
- As necessary, remind the children how the group follows polite tasting manners.



A2: Spinach Leaf Print

The children make a print of a spinach leaf and learn the parts of the plant.

Objective

The children will be able to identify spinach as a lightweight, green leaf vegetable.

Materials Needed

- Plain white paper, one sheet per child
- Spinach leaves
- Crayons or colored pencils (shades of green)
- Drawing of spinach (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 63)

What To Do Ahead of Time

- Organize materials.
- Plan to serve Dilly Spinach Dip and vegetables at snack or mealtime (see Spinach Lane Growing at Home #1 Recipe, page 31).





Activity Length:
15 minutes

The Activity

- Have each child seated at the table(s) with supplies.
- Show a drawing of a spinach leaf to the children. Talk with the children about what spinach looks like. Review the shape (round at one end, coming to a point) and color (green) of spinach.
- Have each child take a piece of paper. Have each child fold the paper in half; assist any children needing help.
- Ask the children to put one leaf of spinach inside the fold of the paper. Instruct the children to rub the crayon or pencil gently on the top of the paper covering the leaf. As the leaf is rubbed, the details of the leaf will appear. Assist those children who need help. After the leaf print is made, remove the spinach leaf from the paper. Have the children look at the leaf print and notice the stem, outline, and any veins of the spinach leaf that are visible.
- Ask the children to wash their hands for meal or snack time (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 43, for directions).



Tip: Depending on the variety of spinach used, rubbing to reveal a leaf image produces different results. Test the spinach available; if rubbing is not successful substitute one of the Garden Art and Crafts Activities.



Connection to Garden Art and Crafts

Stamped Wrapping Paper: (Variation of Stamped Wrapping Paper): Coat spinach leaves with different colors of green paint and press the leaves to the paper. Create interesting designs. If desired, press leaves on smaller sheets of art paper to create a spinach art piece to frame and display (see Booklet 1, Garden Art and Crafts, Stamped Wrapping Paper, page 32).

Activity Connection to Snack or Mealtime

While eating the Dilly Spinach Dip and vegetables at snack or mealtime, talk with the children about how spinach leaves look and taste.



Materials Needed

- Spinach leaves, 6 to 8 leaves per child
- Ranch salad dressing in a squeeze bottle or bowl with spoon
- Paper plates and napkins

What To Do Ahead of Time

- Thoroughly wash spinach leaves with a salad spinner or colander; dry leaves between sheets of paper towel.
- Prepare a plate for each child with 6 to 8 spinach leaves on the plate.

A3: Spinach Flowers

The children create flower shaped snacks from spinach leaves. They explore the feel, smell, and taste of spinach.

Objectives

The children will be able to:

- Tell that the entire spinach stem and leaf can be eaten;
- Make a simple snack with spinach.

Before the Activity—Hand Washing

- Explain that we should always wash our hands before preparing and eating food. Have the children wash their hands (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 43, for directions).
- Explain that we should always wash fresh spinach leaves under running water before they are cooked or eaten. Let the children know you have already washed the spinach.





Activity Length:
10 minutes

The Activity

- Have each child seated at the table(s).
- Explain we always wash spinach before we eat it. Let the children know you have already washed the spinach.
- Tell the children that they are going to make a snack with spinach leaves. Give each child a paper plate with 6 to 8 spinach leaves.
- Let each child put a circle of dressing in the center of their paper plate, about the size of a quarter. Help those who need assistance.
- Show the children how to arrange the spinach leaves around the dressing to create the petals of a flower.

Words To Grow

Leaves	Spinach
Dip	Petals
Flower	

Activity Conclusion—Tasting

- After making the spinach flower, enjoy eating this snack. Tell the children to dip their spinach leaves in the dressing and eat them.
- As the children are eating, ask them to describe how the spinach:
 - ▶ smells (no smell or aroma similar to leaves or grass);
 - ▶ feels in the mouth (chewy); and
 - ▶ tastes (mild).



B. Spinach... Where Do You Come From? Planting Activities

Spinach Growing at Home #2: Send a copy of this resource home with each child at the start of the Section B activities.

Materials Needed

- Spinach seed packets
- Drawings of spinach (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, pages 63-64)
- Spinach leaves and light cream cheese for tasting

What To Do Ahead of Time

- Make copies of Spinach Growing at Home #2—one set per child.
- Assemble materials in central area.
- Spread ½ teaspoon of cream cheese on a clean, dry spinach leaf and roll, at least one per child.

B1: Spinach Starts as Seeds!

The children see and touch spinach seeds and learn how far apart to plant seeds.

Objectives

The children will be able to:

- Describe how spinach grows from a seed into a plant that produces spinach;
- Describe the resources needed to grow spinach.





Activity Length:
10 minutes

The Activity

- Tell the children that today they will learn about how spinach grows. Show the children the spinach seeds. Tell the children people can buy packages of seeds to grow spinach in gardens.
- Pass the seeds around in a clear cup (spinach seeds are small). Let the children touch and count the seeds. Explain that when spinach isn't picked for food, the plants grow flowers. The spinach seeds come from the tops of these flowers.
- Explain that the spinach seeds are planted 6 inches apart in the soil, depending on the instructions given on the seed envelope. The spinach plants need room to spread out when they grow so the rows are planted 12 to 18 inches apart.
- Explain that the spinach seeds are planted in the soil in the spring. The sun and rain help them grow into seedlings above the ground. The seedlings grow into bunches of spinach. Explain that while spinach plants need sun to grow they also need to be in the shade when it gets really hot.
- Show drawing of spinach growing in a field.
- Spinach grows fast. The leaves are ready to be picked about 40 days after the seeds are planted (e.g., the time from Thanksgiving to Christmas, Chanukah, or Kwanzaa). Explain that the entire spinach plant may be cut off just above the ground, or leaves can be picked individually.
- Explain that spinach is picked and taken to a grocery store or a farmers' market. That is where people buy it and take it home to eat. Show drawing of spinach at the grocery store.
- Have the children wash their hands (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 43, for directions).
- Offer spinach leaves rolled around cream cheese for tasting.

Words To Grow

Seeds	Soil
Sun	Water
Space	Plants



Materials Needed

- Spinach seed packets (can be packets from activity B1)
- Paper cups, 5 to 6 ounces in size, one per child
- Potting mix or soil
- Water in a small spray bottle
- Plastic spoons, one per child
- Unsharpened pencils, with a line marking $\frac{1}{2}$ inch
- Waterproof pens or markers
- Wooden craft sticks for plant markers, one per child
- Table covers and smocks for the children
- Sunny location and/or fluorescent lights

What To Do Ahead of Time

- Prepare potting mix or soil with water; according to package directions; divide into containers, one for every three children; place on covered table(s).
- Write spinach on each of the small cups.
- At the table(s), place a small paper cup, three seeds, and a plastic spoon per child.
- Plan to serve Easy, Cheesy Spinach Pie (see Spinach Growing at Home #2 recipe, page 34) at snack or mealtime.

B2: Plant a Spinach Seed

The children start spinach seeds in a cup and learn what the seeds need to grow. (See Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, Grow Seedlings Indoors, page 53, for additional information.)

Objectives

The children will be able to:

- Describe the resources needed to grow spinach;
- Experience planting a spinach seed.

Optional Activity: Grow a Seedling in a Bag (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 52). Display this visual in the classroom. Check daily for progress and compare to what is happening to the children's plants.





Activity Length:
15 minutes

The Activity

- Help each child write his/her name on a cup.
- During the activity, help the children:
 - ▶ Fill their cups about $\frac{3}{4}$ full with moist potting soil.
 - ▶ Gently tap the sides and bottom of their container with their index finger to settle but not pack the soil.
 - ▶ Poke 3 holes in the soil spaced around the cup. Use the marked unsharpened pencil to make holes $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep.
 - ▶ Place a seed in each hole and gently cover the seeds with soil.
 - ▶ Lightly spray water over the top of the soil; help any children needing assistance.
 - ▶ If using wooden plant markers, stick one in the soil close to the inside curve of the cup.
- During the activity, tell the children:
 - ▶ The seeds will grow in the potting soil as plants grow in the soil outside.
 - ▶ The seeds need soil, water, light, and warmth to grow into plants.
 - ▶ Inside, we can use lights to give plants warmth and light, just as the sun helps outside plants grow.
 - ▶ The seeds will grow first into very small plants (seedlings), then into larger plants. These larger plants, if planted outside in a garden, will continue to grow with sunlight and water. The plants will grow larger and become bunches of spinach.
 - ▶ Have the children set their cups in a sunny spot or under lights.
 - ▶ Have the children check their cups weekly to see the progress of the seeds growing into plants.



Green Thumb Guide

Spinach grows easily in containers. Consider making Painted Pots, Garden Stones, and Garden Art Row Markers to send home with the spinach plants.



Connection to Garden Art and Crafts

Garden Stones: See Booklet I, Garden Art and Crafts Section, page 36, for directions on how to make Garden Stones for a creative connection to this activity.

Activity Connection to Snack or Mealtime

While eating Easy, Cheesy Spinach Pie at snack or mealtime, talk about how seeds planted in the soil will grow into plants. The plants will grow into bunches of spinach after a summer of water, sun, and warmth.



Materials Needed

- Spinach seeds or a seed tape, or see planting options
- Garden or flowerbed, 12 feet or longer
- Hoe or trowel to make space to plant seed tape
- Garden hose with sprinkler nozzle or watering can

What To Do Ahead of Time

- If using a seed tape, prepare the seed tape (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, Make a Seed Tape, page 54).
- Prepare garden or flowerbed for planting by tilling (breaking up) and fertilizing the soil (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, Green Thumb-Guide—Gardening Outdoors, page 58).
- Plan to serve spinach in some form at snack or mealtime (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, Ten Terrific Ways..., page 48).

B3: Plant Seeds or a Seed Tape Outdoors

The children plant spinach seeds or a seed tape outdoors. They learn what spinach seeds need to grow into plants.

Objectives

The children will be able to:

- Describe the resources needed to grow spinach;
- Experience planting a spinach seed or seed tape.

Planting Options:

- Follow the directions on the back of the spinach seed packet to plant seeds directly into the ground.
- If you have grown spinach seedlings from seeds inside and hardened the plants for outdoor planting, you can substitute the plants for the seed tape.





Activity Length:
15 minutes

The Activity

- Take the children and the spinach seeds or tape seed outside. Explain that today they will be planting spinach seeds and learning what seeds need to grow into plants.
- Point to the sun. Ask the children how the sunlight feels on their skin. (Warm)
- Explain that the light and warmth of the sun helps spinach seeds grow into plants that will produce more spinach.
- Show the children the soil in a garden or flowerbed. Let them touch the soil. Ask them how the soil feels. (Wet or dry, hard or soft) Explain that spinach seeds need soil to grow into plants.
- Run some water from a hose or pour some from a container and let the children touch it. Ask how it feels. (Wet) Explain that water helps plants grow. Explain that water for plants usually comes as rain. Spinach needs lots of water; farmers and gardeners will use sprinklers in addition to rain to make sure plants have plenty of water.
- Have the children help you lay the seeds or the prepared seed tapes in the soil at the preferred planting depth of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Cover with soil and water. Remind the children how far apart spinach plants are planted (at least 6 inches apart).



Green Thumb Guide

Is space limited? Spinach grows well in a container (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, Green Thumb Guides Container Gardens, page 55). To adapt this activity to plant in a container, see Plant a Strawberry Jar, Strawberry Patch B3 for the 8-to 10-inch container option.

Activity Connection to Snack or Mealtime

Talk about planting the spinach seeds or seed tape while eating spinach at snack or mealtime.



Connection to Garden Art and Crafts

Make a Seed Circle: (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, Make a Seed Tape, page 54) with spinach seeds; paint a pot with spinach leaves and the word spinach; add a bag of potting soil; and give as a Mother's or Father's Day gift (see Booklet 1, Garden Art and Crafts Section).



C. Spinach Stories and Songs

C1: Cool Puppy Pup's Spinach Lunch Party Video

View Cool Puppy Pup's Spinach Lunch Party segment with the children. Discuss the spinach facts covered in this delightful video with the children and have them try Cool Puppy Pup's favorite way to eat spinach.

Objective

The children will be able to describe how spinach is grown, harvested, and eaten.

Materials Needed

- Cool Puppy Pup DVD
- TV and DVD Player
- Spinach leaves and dressing
- Plates, forks, and napkins

What To Do Ahead of Time

- Cue the DVD to start at the Spinach segment.
- Prepare spinach salad, a small portion per child.





Activity Length:
15 minutes

The Activity

- Gather the children and watch the Spinach segment of the video.
- After viewing the segment, ask the children to name their favorite parts of the video. Use their responses to lead into a discussion about the video. During the discussion, include the questions below to review Cool Puppy Pup's main points from the video segment.
- In the video, did Cool Puppy Pup say:
 - ▶ Spinach was a fruit or a vegetable? (Vegetable)
 - ▶ What color is spinach? (Green)
 - ▶ What do the leaves have? (Thin stems)
 - ▶ How do spinach leaves feel? (Smooth and bumpy)
- At Tasty Acres Farm, the farmer talked about how spinach grows.
 - ▶ Where does spinach grow? (On a farm)
 - ▶ Does spinach grow in bunches above or below the ground? (Above the ground)
 - ▶ Are the plants close or far from the ground? (Close)
 - ▶ Where can our families buy spinach after it is picked and shipped from the farm? (Grocery stores and farmers' markets)
- Have the children name some of the ways that spinach can be eaten. (Steamed with a little bit of olive oil, in spinach dip, in muffins, on a pizza, or as salad with a little bit of dressing)
- Have the children wash their hands (see Booklet I, Tool Shed Resources, page 43, for directions).
- Conclude the activity by telling the children they are going to eat spinach salad, the way that Cool Puppy Pup likes spinach best of all.
- Serve the spinach salad.



C2: Reading Activity

Read story books to the children that are about or include the activities of growing and/or eating fruits and vegetables. Listening to such stories can encourage children to adopt positive behaviors that can last a lifetime, like trying new fruits and vegetables.

Objective

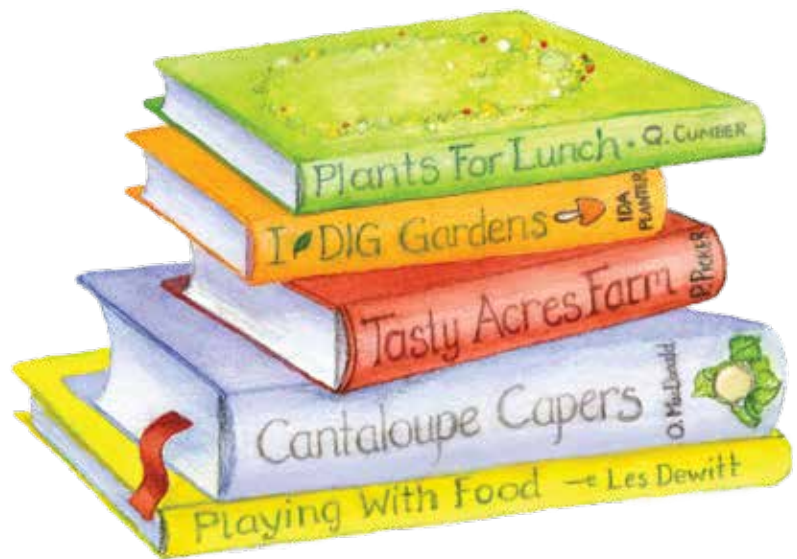
Children will describe the fun and interesting stories about fruits and/or vegetables that were read to them.

Materials Needed

- Books from a library or purchased books
- Space for the children to sit

What To Do Ahead of Time

- Clear a space for the children to sit around you.
- Choose a book from the Harvest of Books list (see Booklet I, Tool Shed Resources, page 50).
- Select a book you would like to read and either borrow it from a library or purchase it.
- Use books relevant to fruits and vegetables that may already be available to you.





Activity Length:
10 to 20 minutes
depending on the
length of the book

The Activity

- Have the children sit around you as you read them the book.
- Ask the children to listen for the names of fruits and vegetables as the story is read.

Discussion Questions:

- After reading the story, ask the children which fruits and vegetables were named in the story and what happened to them. For example,
 - ▶ Where were the fruits and vegetables grown?
 - ▶ What happened to the fruits and vegetables after they were picked?
 - ▶ Who ate the fruits and vegetables?

Add other questions that relate to the story.





C3: Old MacDonald Had a Farm, Spinach Style

The children sing about growing and eating spinach and act out motions to this familiar tune.

Objectives

The children will be able to:

- Sing and act out motions to a familiar tune;
- Say that being physically active helps us feel good.

Materials Needed

- Spinach lyrics to tune “Old MacDonald Had a Farm”
- Large space for the children to move about

What To Do Ahead of Time

- Become familiar with the words and motions of the song.



Activity Length:
10 minutes

The Activity

- Lead the children in singing these new words to the tune “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” and demonstrate the suggested motions or make up new ones.
- Encourage the children to move about as they are singing.
- Explain that skipping, wiggling, stretching, running, jumping, and playing actively every day helps us to feel good and stay healthy.



Old MacDonald Had a Farm, Spinach Style

The children sing about growing and eating spinach and act out motions to this familiar tune.

1st Verse

Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!
On this farm, he grew some spinach, EIEIO!
Plant seeds here and plant seeds there,
Here seeds, there seeds, everywhere spinach seeds!
Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!

2nd Verse

Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!
On this farm, he grew some spinach, EIEIO!
Water spinach here and water spinach there,
Here water, there water, everywhere water, water!
Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!

3rd Verse

Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!
On this farm, he grew some spinach, EIEIO!
Pick spinach here and pick spinach there,
Here a pick, there a pick, everywhere pick spinach.
Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!

4th Verse

Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!
On this farm, he grew some spinach, EIEIO!
With a bite, bite here, and a bite, bite there,
Here a bite, there a bite, everywhere a spinach bite.
Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO!

(Skip in place)

(Pretend to carry a basket of spinach)
(Pretend to dig ground and plant
using large, vigorous motions)

(Skip in place)

(Skip in place)

(Pretend to carry a basket of spinach)
(Pretend to hold a watering can
and water plants-walking along the rows)

(Skip in place)

(Skip in place)

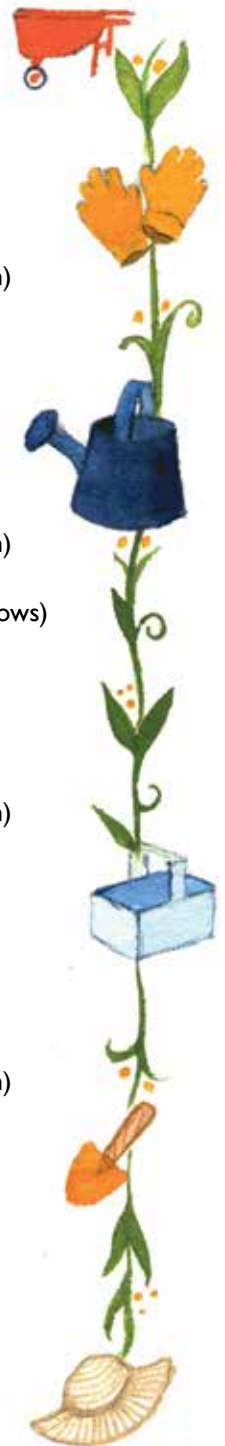
(Pretend to carry a basket of spinach)
(Pretend to kneel and pick spinach)
(Pretend to kneel and pick spinach)

(Skip in place)

(Skip in place)

(Pretend to carry a basket of spinach)
(Pretend to eat spinach)
(Pretend to eat spinach)

(Skip in place)





D. Introducing MyPlate Nutrition Education Activities

Materials Needed

- *Eat Smart To Play Hard With MyPlate* poster (see Booklet 1)
- Spinach, romaine, and green leaf lettuce leaves
- Plates and napkins

What To Do Ahead of Time

- Review the foods and activities depicted on the poster.
- Display the poster.
- Wash and dry several leaves each of spinach, romaine, and green leaf lettuce; reserve a large leaf of each for display.
- Tear romaine and green leaf lettuce leaves in pieces the size of a spinach leaf, one each per child.
- Make copies of *MyPlate* coloring page (new or use copies from a previous D1 activity)—one per child.
- Copy *Spinach Growing at Home #3*—one set per child.

Spinach Growing at Home #3: Send a copy of this resource home with each child at the start of the Section D activities.

D1: Let Us Try More Leafy Greens

Introduce the children to the *Eat Smart To Play Hard With MyPlate* poster. The children find spinach and other leafy greens in the Vegetables group. They taste the difference between romaine and green leaf lettuce and spinach leaves.

Objectives

The children will be able to:

- Say that spinach is found in the Vegetables group.
- Say that eating vegetables like spinach help keep us healthy;
- Compare spinach to other leafy green vegetables;
- Say that being physically active every day helps us feel good and is fun;
- Say that eating foods from the different food groups each day helps us grow and be healthy;
- Identify a food from each of the five food groups.

Before the Activity-Hand Washing and Polite Tasting

- Explain that we should always wash our hands before preparing and eating food. Have the children wash their hands (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 43 for directions).
- If necessary, remind the children about polite food tasting habits (see, Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 44 for details).



Activity Length:
25 minutes;
30 minutes if
optional coloring
activity conducted

The Activity

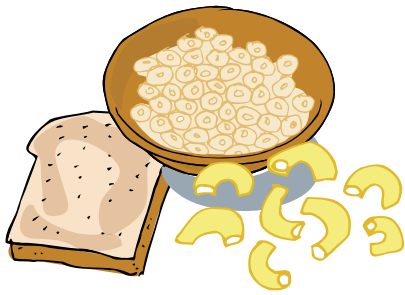
Learning the Food Groups

- Seat the children in a semicircle on the floor in view of the *Eat Smart To Play Hard With MyPlate* poster.
- Tell the children today they are going to learn about ways to be healthy and have fun every day. Tell the children that the best part is they like to do what helps them be healthy: they like to eat a variety of foods and they like to play.
- Point out the *Eat Smart To Play Hard With MyPlate* poster to the children. Ask the children to tell you what they see on the poster. Accept all correct answers, such as food, specific foods by name, children playing, and specific activities by name, etc.
- Explain that MyPlate shows the five food groups a person should eat from each day. Each food group has its own color: The Fruit Group is red, the Vegetable Group is green, the Grains Group is orange, the Dairy Group is blue, and the Protein Foods Group is purple. Eating foods from each food group helps us to be healthy and grow

This activity continues on the following pages.

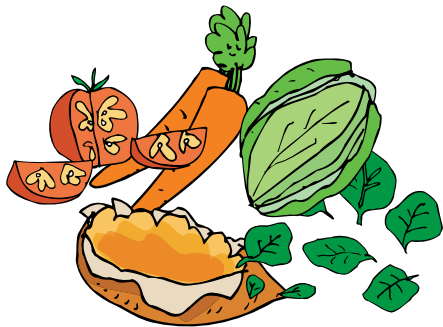


Grains



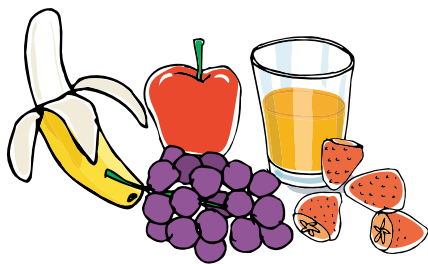
- Point to the orange band of color on the poster and ask the children to name the color (orange). Tell the children that foods made from grains are in the Grains group represented by the orange color band. Point to the bread and the cereal in the Grains group on the orange band of the poster and state that bread and cereal give us energy to play. Ask two children to come to the poster; point to a food in the orange section, and name the food. After each child names a food, repeat the name of the food, and state that _____ (the food named) and other foods from the Grains group also give us energy to play.
- Children this age may not know what a grain is. Tell them grains come from plants such as wheat, oats, and corn. Grains are used to make foods like cereal, bread, and pasta.

Vegetables



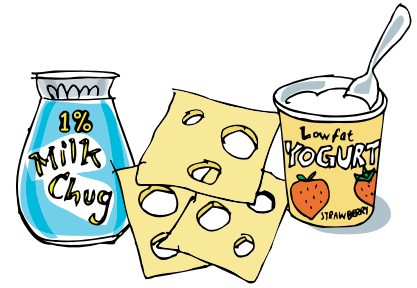
- Point to the green band of color on the poster and ask the children to name the color (green). Tell the children that foods from plants called vegetables are in the Vegetables group represented by the green color band. Point out the broccoli in the Vegetables group on the green band of the poster. Ask the children to name this vegetable (broccoli). Ask the children to name spinach's color (green). Explain that eating a green-colored vegetable, like spinach, often is a way to be healthy. Ask two children to come to the poster; point to a vegetable on the green section, and name the vegetable. After each child names a vegetable, repeat the name of the vegetable and state that _____ (the vegetable named) and other foods from the Vegetables group also help keep us healthy.

Fruits

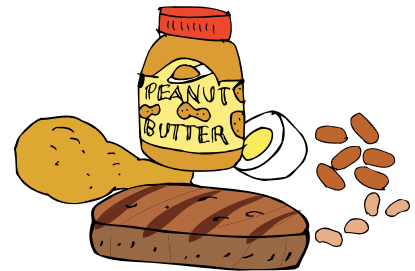


- Point to the red band of color on the poster and ask the children to name the color (red). Tell the children that foods from plants called fruits are in the Fruits group represented by the red color band. Point to the peach and strawberry shown in the Fruits group on the red band of the poster and state that peaches and strawberries help keep us healthy. Ask two children to come to the poster; point to a fruit in the red section, and name the fruit. After each child names a fruit, repeat the name of the fruit, and state that _____ (the fruit named) and other foods from the Fruits group also help keep us healthy.

- Point to the blue band of color on the poster and ask the children to name the color (blue). Tell the children that milk and foods made from milk are in the Dairy group represented by the blue color band. Point to the milk and yogurt in the Dairy group on the blue band and state that milk and yogurt help us build strong bones. Tell the children that it is good to choose low-fat and fat-free milk, yogurt, and cheese when given a choice. Ask two children to come to the poster; point out a food in the blue section, and name the food. After each child names a food, repeat the name of the food, and state that _____ (the food named) and other foods from the Dairy group also help us build strong bones.



- Point to the purple band of color on the poster and ask the children to name the color (purple). Tell the children that foods from animals and some plants are in the Protein foods group represented by the purple color band. Point to the meat, fish, egg, beans and peanut butter in the Protein Foods group below the purple band and state that they help our muscles grow. Ask two children to come to the poster; point out a food in the purple section, and name the food. After each child names a food, repeat the name of the food, and state that _____ (the food named) and other foods from the Protein Foods group also help our muscles grow. (Note: if only foods that come from animals are selected, point out a food from plants and name it. If only foods from plants are selected, point out a food that comes from animals and name it.)





Review Activity

- While the children are still seated, point to each food group color band on the *MyPlate for Preschoolers* poster.
- Ask the children to name the food group each color represents and to name a food from that group.

- **Orange** – Grains group
- **Green** – Vegetables group
- **Red** – Fruits group
- **Blue** – Dairy group
- **Purple** – Protein Foods group

Tasting Activity

- Show the children the romaine and green leaf lettuce. Tell the children that these are leafy greens similar to spinach.
- Give the children individual samples of each leafy green to feel, smell, taste, and compare to spinach. Note all three are chewy.
- After the children have tasted their own samples of the vegetables, invite the children to feel and smell the larger leaves of romaine and green lettuce. Discard the leaves at end of lesson.
- Ask the children to name different ways to eat vegetables like spinach and lettuce at different meals and snacks. Accept all answers such as on sandwiches, in vegetable salads, in dips, etc.

Be Active-Spinach Stretch

Note to Caregiver: Active play and movement are important for every child's growth and development. Although they may seem to be active and energetic, most children do not get the amount of physical activity they need for good health. Child care programs should provide opportunities for young children (2 to 6 years of age) to engage in 90 to 120 minutes (1 ½ to 2 hours) of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day.

Several short periods of activity (10-20 minutes each) work well for young children and are easy to plan into the day. Examples of moderate to vigorous physical activity that kids this age enjoy include: playing on outdoor play equipment, dancing to music, taking a nature (or garden) walk, relay races, movement games, hopping, skipping, galloping, and riding a tricycle or bicycle. For additional information on physical activity for young children, refer to the Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children: Provider Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program at <http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/nutritionandwellness.html>.

- Point to the various activities depicted on the *Eat Smart To Play Hard With MyPlate* poster. Ask the children to tell you why it is important to be physically active and play every day, i.e., it helps you be strong and healthy, and is fun. Tell the children that today they will learn to be active in a way that reminds them of the leafy greens they just tasted.
- Ask the children to extend their arms out to the side and spread apart from each other so that no one is able to touch easily another child's fingers. When children are spaced around the room, ask them to lower their arms and listen carefully. Tell the children that stretching is an important way to be active. Ask the children to watch you show them a special stretch that celebrates spinach.
- Squat to the ground and wrap the arms around the knees, with the heels slightly raised, creating a ball shape with your body. Tell the children the stretch starts the way a spinach plant starts, with a little round seed. Slowly drop the heels and straighten the legs and extend the arms to touch the toes or reach as far toward the toes as is comfortable, ending in a forward bend from the waist with the arms and head down. Tell the children the spinach plant starts to grow and stretch out. Next, gradually roll the spine up to a standing position and raise the arms above the head. Now fan the arms out to the side, pretending the arms are the edges of the spinach leaf. Sway gently from side to side in the slight breeze that blows through Spinach Lane.
- Ask the children to do the Spinach Stretch with you several times. During each stretch, remind the children of the stages of how spinach grows.
- Conclude the activity by telling the children it is fun to eat spinach and other leafy greens and be physically active by doing a Spinach Stretch.

Optional Concluding Activity: Have the children sit at tables with coloring supplies. Distribute a copy of the *MyPlate* coloring page (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 83) to each child. Ask the children to color the Vegetables group section of MyPlate green and draw and color a spinach leaf near it or use the Blackline master of a spinach leaf (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 75). With older children have them copy the dot-to-dot outline of the word "Vegetables". Ask the children to draw a favorite way they like to be physically active on the page. If desired, collect the sheet for use in future fruit and vegetable units in *Grow It, Try It, Like It!*



Materials Needed

- Spinach-Strawberry-Cantaloupe Salad Recipe ingredients—see the Child Care Center version of this recipe on page 28
- Plates, forks, and napkins

What To Do Ahead of Time

- Prepare the recipe.
- Prepare table(s).

D2: Say Hip, Hip, Hooray for Spinach

The children taste a new spinach recipe and talk about the different ways to eat spinach.

Objectives

The children will be able to:

- Taste spinach in a combination food, Spinach-Strawberry-Cantaloupe Salad;
- Describe many different ways to eat spinach.

Option: Make the recipe as part of the activity.

Before the Activity—Hand Washing and Polite Tasting

- Explain that we should always wash our hands before preparing and eating food. Have the children wash their hands (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 43, for directions).
- If necessary, remind the children about polite food tasting habits (see Booklet 1, Tool Shed Resources, page 44, for details).





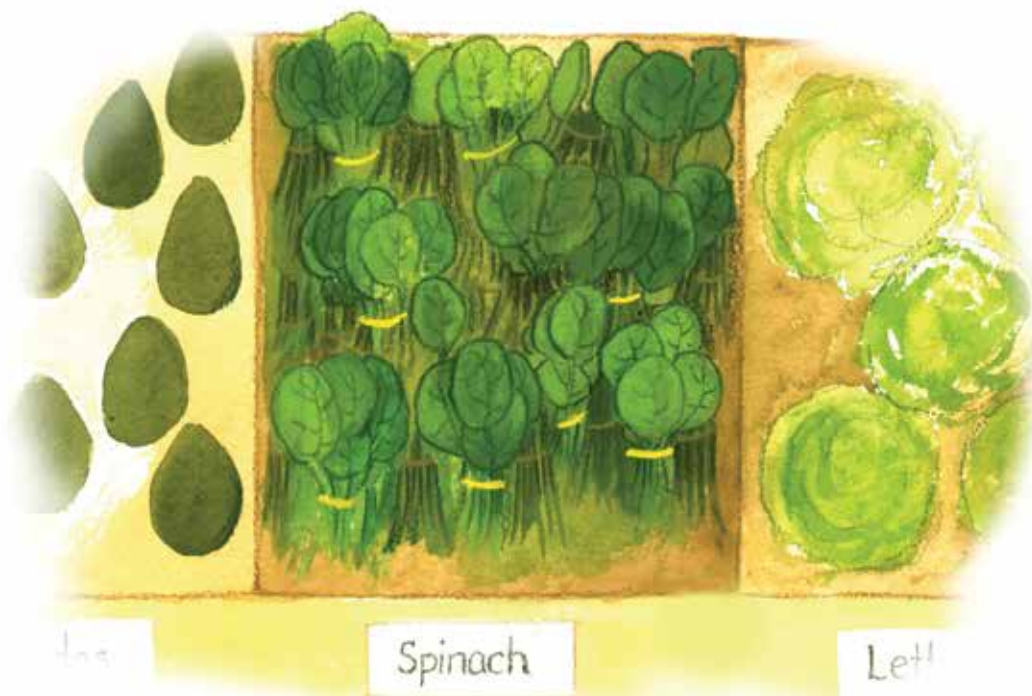
Activity Length:
10-15 minutes

The Activity

- Seat the children at the table(s).
- Ask the children to share what they remember learning about spinach.
- Encourage responses such as how and where spinach grows; how it looks, feels, smells, and tastes; and other material covered in the unit.
- Tell the children that the unit on spinach ends with a celebration of a new way to eat spinach. Spinach can be part of a salad of other foods.
- Show the children the Spinach-Strawberry-Cantaloupe Salad and talk about the other foods in the salad. If making recipe as part of the activity, make it at this point.
- Serve the children the Spinach-Strawberry-Cantaloupe Salad.
- As the children are eating, ask:
 - ▶ What spinach recipes have they made with their parents?
 - ▶ What different ways have they eaten spinach?
 - ▶ What new ways do they think spinach could be eaten?
- Give suggestions such as spinach steamed with olive oil and lemon juice, in vegetable dip, in breads or muffins, in cheesy pie or omelets, in casseroles, as a topping on pizza, and in salads.

Words To Grow

Spinach	Salad
Cantaloupe	Strawberries
Omelets	Pizza topping



Spinach-Strawberry-Cantaloupe Salad

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Yield: 12 ½-cup child-size servings

½ cup provides ¼ cup fruit/vegetable towards CACFP meal pattern

For the Child and Adult Care Food Program

- **4 cups fresh spinach leaves**
- **1 cup bite-size pieces of fresh strawberries**
- **1 cup bite-size pieces of fresh cantaloupe**
- **Poppy seed salad dressing or raspberry vinaigrette**

1. Wash and prepare spinach, strawberries, and cantaloupe, see Tips below.
2. Tear spinach and cut fruit into bite-size pieces.
3. Toss spinach and fruit pieces together in a large bowl.
4. Dress lightly with dressing of choice.
5. Serve immediately. Refrigerate any leftovers.

Strawberry Tips

Wash strawberries in a colander just before use. Gently dry with paper towel. Remove green leaves and stem with knife.

Cantaloupe Tips

Scrub outside rind of the cantaloupe with vegetable brush. Cut in half, scoop out seeds, remove rind, and store any extra melon in an airtight container in refrigerator.

Spinach Tips

Wash in salad spinner or in colander with lots of water. Press leaves between paper towel sheets to dry before tearing into bite-size pieces.

Cooking with Children

Young children can:

- Wash hands first
- Help use a salad spinner to wash spinach
- Dry spinach leaves washed in a colander between sheets of paper towel
- Tear spinach into pieces
- Help wash and dry strawberries
- Help cut some pieces of strawberries and soft, ripe cantaloupe using a small plastic knife and a cutting board (not the entire recipe amount)

Adults should hull strawberries (remove green leaves and stems), use a sharp knife to cut cantaloupe in half, remove seeds and rind, and cut into smaller chunks. If cantaloupe is firm, an adult should cut it into bite-size pieces.



Nutrients per 1 child-size serving of ½ cup: Calories 43, Protein 0.5 g, Carbohydrate 4 g, Total Fat 3.1 g, Saturated Fat 0.4 g, Cholesterol 2 mg, Vitamin A 1150 IU, Vitamin C 16.9 mg, Iron 0.4 mg, Calcium 14 mg, Sodium 18 mg, Dietary Fiber 0.7 g

Growing at Home Materials...

for Spinach Lane Lessons



Spinach Growing at Home #1

Home Activities From Grow It, Try It, Like It!

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Today we started our unit focusing on the vegetable spinach. Activities focused on spinach are included throughout your child's day.

Today your child learned about spinach and how this vegetable looks, feels, tastes, and smells. Your child has learned that spinach:

- Has large, dark-green crinkled leaves;
- Feels smooth, but bumpy;
- Has thin stems; and
- Has leaves that are chewy.

Dilly Spinach Dip is an easy recipe you and your child can make together. The recipe is on the following page. Children love to dip foods. Every mouthful of this dip gives two bites of vegetables, spinach in the dip and the vegetable used for dipping. You can also try adding spinach to a favorite family dip recipe.

Enclosed with this note is a **Dot-to-Dot activity**; it features the shape of a spinach leaf. While your child does this activity at home with you, count the ways your family enjoys spinach. If you count only a few ways, talk with your child about new ideas for eating spinach. Try a simple change of pace—put a few fresh spinach leaves on a sandwich in place of lettuce.

Please call if you have questions about this activity or want more information.

Sincerely,

Child Care Center Director

Tip:

Be persistent! Studies show children sometimes need to have a new food offered 8-12 times before they will voluntarily choose to eat it. Many parents stop after 4 or 5 times. Go the distance! Keep trying!



Dilly Spinach Dip

Preparation Time: 5 minutes

Serves: (2 cups) 64 child-size 1-Tablespoon portions

Serves: 32 adult-size 2-Tablespoon portions

- **1 10-oz package frozen, chopped, spinach (thawed and squeezed dry)**
- **1 cup low-fat or fat-free cottage cheese**
- **1 cup low-fat or fat-free sour cream**
- **2 tsp dried dill**
- **½ tsp garlic powder**
- **½ tsp onion powder**
- **Cut up vegetables for dipping (e.g., carrots, celery, broccoli, summer squash)**

1. Wash hands thoroughly and squeeze the water from thawed spinach over sink or bowl. Place squeezed spinach into medium-size bowl.
2. Puree cottage cheese and sour cream together in food processor or blender or mash cottage cheese with fork until most of lumps are smooth.
3. Thoroughly mix squeezed spinach and blended mixture in medium size bowl using fork to break the spinach apart.
4. Add seasonings and mix thoroughly.
5. Cover and refrigerate for 2 hours to blend flavors.
6. Serve as a dip with cut-up vegetable pieces for dipping.

Variations: Substitute 1 package of Italian salad dressing mix, vegetable soup mix, or onion soup mix for the seasonings.

Safety Note—Defrost the frozen spinach in the microwave, if desired. Be sure to let microwave-thawed spinach cool for 10 minutes before squeezing liquid out. Thawing in a microwave can create hot spots that might burn hands. Breaking the spinach apart will help any hot spots cool.

Cooking with Children

Young children can:

- Wash hands first
- Help squeeze liquid from spinach – wash hands thoroughly before starting
- Break squeezed spinach apart with a fork
- Sprinkle seasonings measured by adult into mixture
- Pour seasoning from packet opened by adults

Adults should do all steps involving a food processor or blender.



Nutrients per 1 child-size serving of 1 tablespoon: Calories 8.5, Protein .7 g, Carbohydrate .6 g, Total Fat 0.4 g, Saturated Fat 0.3 g, Cholesterol 1.5 mg, Vitamin A 360 IU, Vitamin C 1.2 mg, Iron 1 mg, Calcium 12.5 mg, Sodium 20 mg, Dietary Fiber 0.2 g

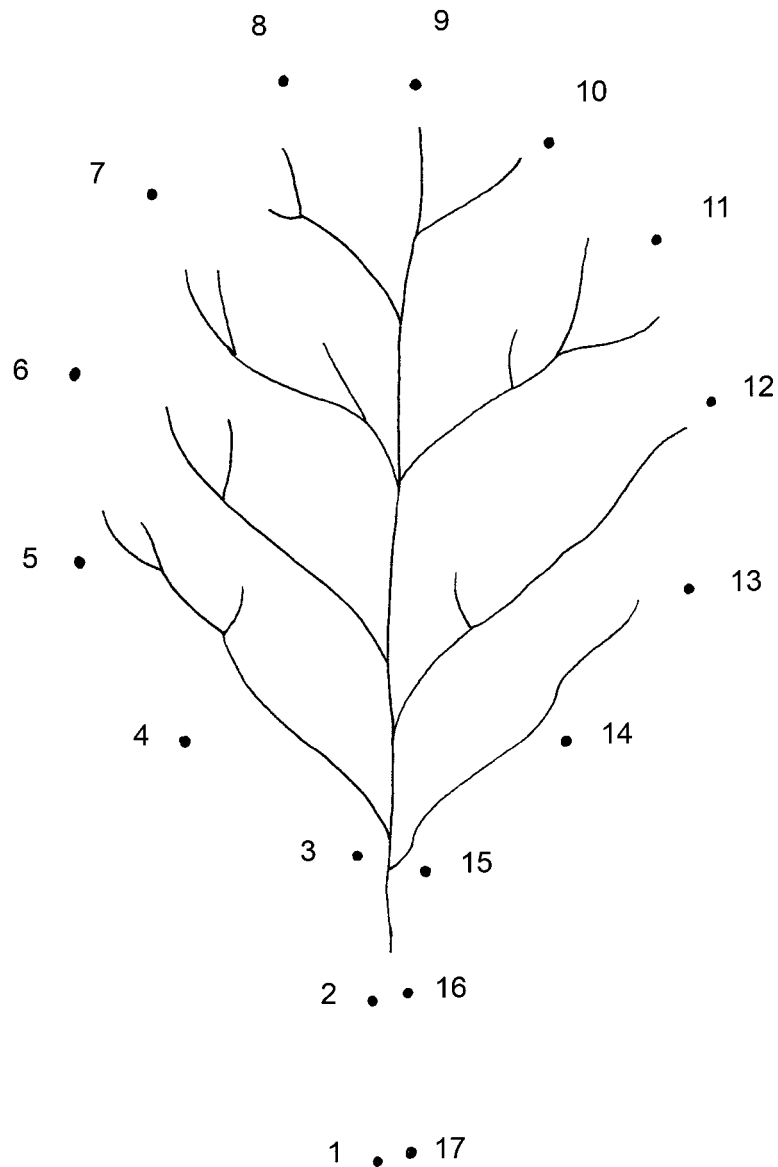
Spinach Dot-to-Dot

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Your child has been learning about spinach, how it looks and feels. Help your child complete this dot-to-dot activity. The completed dot-to-dot reveals

a spinach leaf. Talk with your child about different ways to eat spinach while he or she colors the spinach leaf. Have your child complete the activity below.

Connect the dots



Easy, Cheesy Spinach Pie

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 35-45 minutes

Serves: 12 child-size portions of $\frac{1}{12}$ th of the pie

Serves: 6 adult-size portions of $\frac{1}{6}$ th of the pie

- **1 10-oz package frozen chopped, spinach (thawed, and squeezed dry)**
- **4 oz reduced-fat cheddar cheese, shredded (1 cup shredded cheese)**
- **3 Tbsp fresh onions, very finely chopped, or to taste**
- **1 tsp minced garlic (fresh or from jar), or to taste**
- **1 cup reduced fat biscuit mix**
- **2 cups low-fat or fat-free milk**
- **4 large eggs, beaten**
- **Nonstick cooking spray**

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit, with oven rack in lower position.
2. Spray the bottom of 9-inch pie pan with nonstick spray.
3. Remove as much water as possible from thawed spinach. Wash hands thoroughly and squeeze handfuls of thawed spinach over sink or bowl. Place squeezed spinach into pie pan.
4. In pie pan, break apart clumps of squeezed spinach. Mix shredded cheese, onion, and spinach together with fork until evenly mixed.
5. In medium bowl, gradually combine biscuit mix with low-fat or fat-free milk. Using whisk, mix $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of low-fat or fat-free milk at a time into biscuit mix, so mixture blends evenly.
6. Thoroughly mix beaten eggs into biscuit mixture.
7. Pour biscuit mixture evenly over spinach mixture in pan.
8. Place pie pan in oven on lower rack and bake 35-45 minutes until golden brown and a knife inserted in middle of pie comes out clean.

Remove pie from oven. Let pie set 5 minutes. Cut into slices and serve.

Variation: Use muffin tins to make individual pies. Spray 24 muffin tins with nonstick spray. Spoon a tablespoon of the spinach cheese mixture in each muffin tin, dividing the mixture evenly among the tins. Pour $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of biscuit mixture over the top of each muffin tin, dividing mixture evenly between tins. Bake for 15-20 minutes. Make mini pies by spooning a heaping teaspoon of the spinach-cheese mixture into a nonstick-sprayed mini muffin tin. Pour $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of biscuit mixture over top. Bake for 10-12 minutes. Recipe makes 24 muffin-size or 48 mini-size muffin pies.

Safety Note – Defrost the frozen spinach in the microwave, if desired. Be sure to let microwave-thawed spinach set for 10 minutes before squeezing liquid out. Thawing in a microwave can create hot spots that might burn hands. Breaking the spinach apart will help any hot spots cool.

Cooking with Children

Young children can:

- Wash hands first
- Help squeeze liquid from spinach – wash hands thoroughly before starting
- Count eggs
- Help spoon spinach-cheese mixture into muffin or mini muffin tins

Adults should shred cheese, chop onion, mince garlic, mix spinach-cheese mixture, combine biscuit/milk/egg mixture, and do all tasks involving the oven.



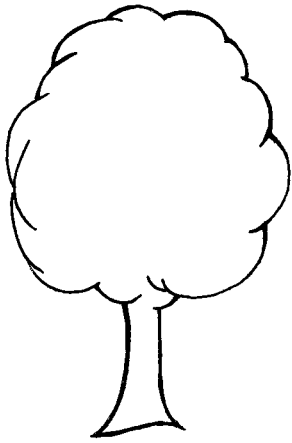
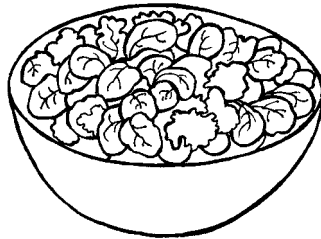
Nutrients (using low-fat milk) per 1 child-size portion of pie, $\frac{1}{12}$ th of pie: Calories 113, Protein 7.5 g, Carbohydrate 10.3 g, Total Fat 4.5 g, Saturated Fat 2 g, Cholesterol 78 mg, Vitamin A 2090 IU, Vitamin C 6.4 mg, Iron 1.1 mg, Calcium 185.9 mg, Sodium 253 mg, Dietary Fiber 1g

Where Does Spinach Grow?

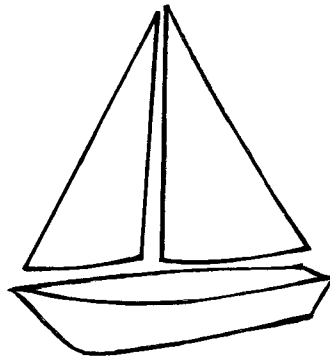
Dear Parents and Guardians:

Help your child recall all we've learned about growing spinach. Have your child draw a line from the bowl of spinach to the picture showing where spinach

grows. Talk with your child about how spinach gets to our homes—we buy it at the store or farmers' market.



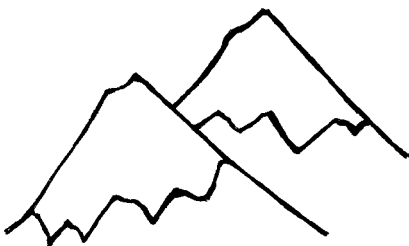
On a tree



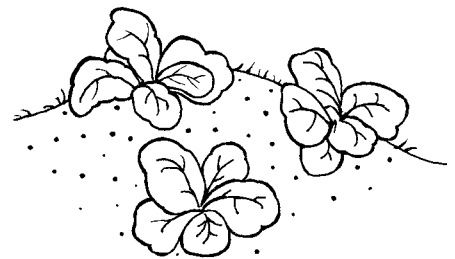
On a boat



In a building



On a snow-covered mountain



In a field

Spinach-Strawberry-Cantaloupe Salad

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Serves: 12 child-size ½-cup portions

Serves: 6 adult-size 1-cup portions

- 4 cups fresh spinach leaves
- 1 cup bite-size pieces of fresh strawberries
- 1 cup bite-size pieces of fresh cantaloupe
- Poppy seed salad dressing or raspberry vinaigrette

1. Wash and prepare spinach, strawberries, and cantaloupe, see Tips below.
2. Tear spinach and cut fruit into bite-size pieces.
3. Toss spinach and fruit pieces together in large bowl.
4. Dress lightly with dressing of choice.
5. Serve immediately. Refrigerate any leftovers.

Strawberry Tips

Wash strawberries in a colander just before use. Gently dry with paper towel. Remove green leaves and stem with knife.

Cantaloupe Tips

Scrub outside rind of cantaloupe with vegetable brush. Cut in half, scoop out seeds, remove rind, and store any extra melon in an airtight container in refrigerator.

Spinach Tips

Wash in salad spinner or in colander with lots of water. Press leaves between paper towel sheets to dry before tearing into bite-size pieces.

Cooking with Children

Young children can:

- Wash hands first
- Help use a salad spinner to wash spinach
- Dry spinach leaves washed in a colander between sheets of paper towel
- Tear spinach into pieces
- Help wash and dry strawberries
- Help cut some pieces of strawberries and soft, ripe cantaloupe using a small plastic knife and a cutting board

Adults should hull strawberries (remove green leaves and stems), use a sharp knife to cut cantaloupe in half, remove seeds and rind, and cut into smaller chunks. If cantaloupe is firm, an adult should cut it into bite-size pieces.



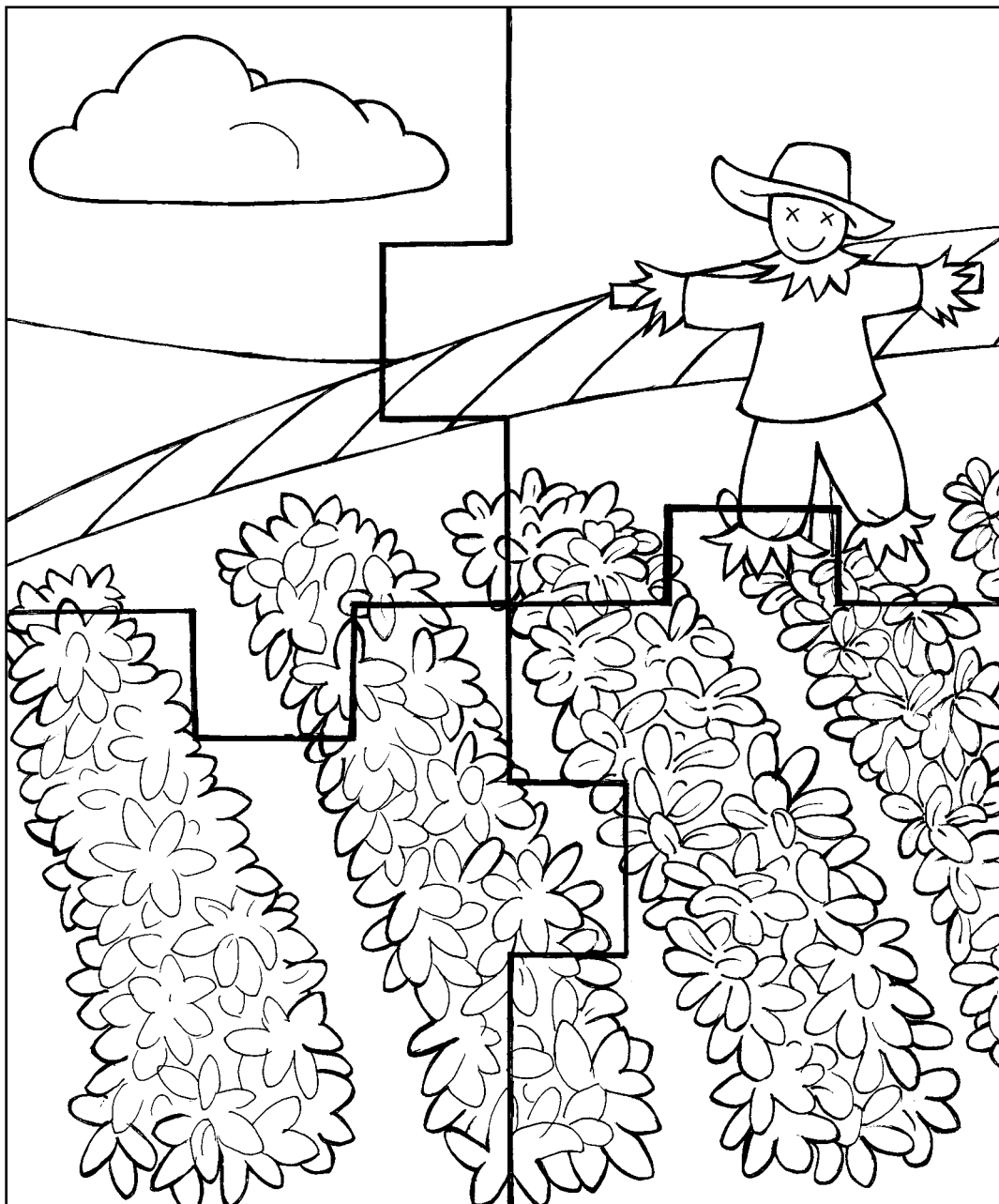
Nutrients per 1 child-size serving of ½ cup: Calories 43, Protein 0.5 g, Carbohydrate 4 g, Total Fat 3.1 g, Saturated Fat 0.4 g, Cholesterol 2 mg, Vitamin A 1150 IU, Vitamin C 16.9 mg, Iron 0.4 mg, Calcium 14 mg, Sodium 18 mg, Dietary Fiber 0.7 g

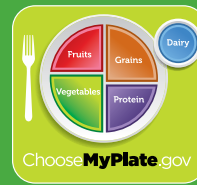
Spinach Puzzle Pieces

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Have your child color this drawing of spinach growing in a field. Glue the colored page to piece of cardboard (a cereal box works great). Cut the puzzle pieces out along the lines. Have your child put the puzzle pieces together.

Keep the puzzle and encourage your child to put it together often. Each time the puzzle is used, talk about spinach. Ask your child how spinach grows. Talk about ways to eat it.





United States Department of Agriculture • Food and Nutrition Service
Find more fun resources at these Web sites:

teammnutrition.usda.gov
choosemyplate.gov

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September 2009
FNS-406