

# Sweet Potato

**GRADE**  
**2-3**

**Month: November**

**Time Required: 30 minutes**

**Alternative Tastings: Carrot, Radish, Jicama, Potato**

## Lesson Goals

- Students will increase their knowledge of fruits and vegetables.
- Students will learn to try new fruits and vegetables and increase their preference for them.
- Students will learn that their peers like to eat fruits and vegetables.
- Students will learn how to ask their parents/caregivers for the fruits and vegetables tasted in class.

## Lesson Objectives

- Students will be able to practice naming and celebrating personal qualities.
- Students will be able to identify root vegetables as grown underground.

## Materials

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Picture of a sweet potato plant (above ground view) | <input type="checkbox"/> Water bottle with water                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diagram of a sweet potato plant, showing roots      | <input type="checkbox"/> Rags   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whole, raw sweet potato                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Food storage bags                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooler  | <input type="checkbox"/> Tasting materials (plates, napkins, etc.)            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning wipes                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet potatoes for cooking (depending on class size) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric skillet                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Olive oil (or vegetable, canola, etc.)               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic tote (to transport electric skillet)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Salt   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spatula   | <input type="checkbox"/> Pepper   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Power strip (with long cord)                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Preferred spices (ex: garlic, cumin, etc.)           |

## Preparation

- Wash sweet potatoes; peel and cut into ½” cubes.
- Portion sweet potatoes into food storage bags (one per lesson).
- Add olive oil and spices to the bag.

## Recommended Books

“The Little Sweet Potato” by Amy Beth Bloom  
“Oliver’s Vegetables” by Vivian French

“In the Garden with Dr. Carver” by Susan Grigsby  
“The Creepy Carrots” by Aaron Reynolds

## Standards Connection

This lesson supports the following Iowa Core standards.

### Health Education

[Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8](#)

### Science

Second grade - [2-LS4-1](#).  
Biodiversity

Third grade - [3-LS1-1](#).  
LS1.B: Growth and development of organisms

## Lesson Checklist

- Physical Activity
- Tasting
- Voting
- “Asking” Discussion
- Newsletters, Bingo cards, Stickers, Incentives
- Science Connection: Diverse plants

## Engage

### 1. Introduction: 2 minutes

*The “Introduction” section is a time to introduce yourself, recap previous lessons, establish norms, or introduce the day's lesson.*

\*You may want to preheat your electric skillet for the cooking activity and alert students to the hot skillet. Preheat to medium, depending on the skillet.

### 2. Engage Activity: 5 minutes

*The “Engage Activity” section has two purposes: 1) to activate students' prior knowledge and 2) to engage every student.*

*We all have invisible qualities - personality traits, things we're good at, or things we like. These are things you can't always see just by looking at a person. Share one of your invisible qualities that you love about yourself (for example, maybe you love that you're an excellent cook).*

Think-pair-share: *What is an invisible quality that you love about yourself?*

- *Think to yourself quietly.* Have students close their eyes, put their fingers to their temples, and think real hard.
- Then, have students turn to a partner and share their invisible qualities.
- After a couple minutes, bring the class back together and select students to share out. If you use “pick a stick,” this is a good way to randomly select students to share.

## Explore

### 3. Experiential Learning: 13 minutes

*This is a time for students to familiarize themselves with what you'll be tasting. The best way to do this is through a hands-on or exploratory activity.*

Show an above-ground picture of a sweet potato plant. *There is something special about this plant that we can't immediately see. This is a sweet potato plant. Other fruits and vegetables we've trusted grow on the parts of the plant we can see above ground.* Then show a diagram of a sweet potato plant to reveal the sweet potatoes and roots. *However, sweet potatoes grow below ground, where we can't see them. This is why a sweet potato is called a “root vegetable.”* Show the raw, whole sweet potato and point out evidence that sweet potatoes are root vegetables (rough peel, root hairs, soil, etc).

Show the bag of prepared potatoes and explain how you washed and prepared them and how you'll be cooking them. Before you add the potatoes to the preheated electric skillet, ask students to listen very carefully for the “sizzle” noises. Add the sweet potatoes to the skillet. Leave uncovered. Stir occasionally. Cook for 10 minutes or until tender.

Physical activity: While the sweet potatoes are cooking, gather students in a large circle for a game of “hot potato.”

- Play music and start passing around a whole sweet potato to the person next to you.
- If the music stops on you, you need to show the class your favorite dance move. Have the rest of the students copy their move.
- Repeat until desired time.

## Explore (cont'd)

### 4. Tasting Activity: 3 minutes

*The “Tasting Activity” section is when students get to try the fruit or vegetable. Don’t forget to review your food tasting norms (for example, “don’t yuck my yum”).*

Before you pass out any samples, be sure to review your brave tasting rules (for example, don’t yuck my yum, we all try together, etc.). As students receive their samples, ask them to use their senses while they wait.

## Reflect

### 5. Voting Activity: 2 minutes

*This is a time for students to give their opinion on what they tried!*

As students taste the potato, have them vote with their thumbs. Observe their voting and offer positive reinforcement regarding the Brave Taster Rules. If a student dislikes the tasting, perhaps ask what they would change about it.

### 6. Reflection: 5 minutes

*Reflection is one of the most important processes for students to process and retain new information or experiences. Give students an opportunity to reflect on what they’ve learned or tried in your lesson. This is an excellent place for students to practice the “Asking Discussion.”*

#### Reflection questions:

- *Will someone share what they liked or loved about the sweet potatoes?* Select a couple students to share.
- *Will someone share what they would change about the sweet potatoes?* Select a couple students to share.
- *Where do root vegetables grow?* Below ground
- *What else do you remember about sweet potatoes?* Rough peel, root hairs, soil on them
- *Raise your hand if you’re excited to go home and tell your family about tasting sweet potatoes.*
  - Ask a student with a raised hand: *if you wanted to try this at home, how might you ask your grown-ups?*
  - You might also ask additional questions like, *where could you buy sweet potatoes?*

Leave newsletters, incentives, stickers, and BINGO sheets with the teachers to pass out.







## Additional Materials

### Physical Activity

More ideas for physical activity are available at <https://idph.iowa.gov/inn/play-your-way/brain-breaks>.

### What You Need to Know About Sweet Potatoes

- The sweet potato grows underground; it is the root of the plant. Because it grows under the ground, we scrub the outside to remove soil and germs before we cut it open.
- It is very hard when harvested; when you cook it, it becomes soft.
- Sweet potatoes can be long and thin or short and fat, but always taper at the ends.
- Store sweet potatoes in a cool, dry, well-ventilated container. Do not store in the refrigerator as it will produce a hard center and unpleasant taste.
- Sweet potatoes are usually the size of regular white potatoes. The smooth, thin skin can be eaten. Choose firm sweet potatoes with no signs of decay. Look for uniform shape for even cooking. Some sweet potatoes grow in Iowa.
- Find them in the grocery store fresh, canned or frozen.

### Facts About Sweet Potatoes

- The Native Americans were growing sweet potatoes when Columbus came to America in 1492. By the 16th century, sweet potatoes were being grown in the southern states.
- North Carolina is the top-producing state of sweet potatoes. They produce 50 percent of the nation's annual crop.
- Sweet potatoes are “cured” (placed in a newspaper-lined box) after harvest for about two weeks. During this time, the sweet potato starch changes to sweet sugar.
- Sweet potatoes are different from yams. Most “yams” labeled in the U.S. are actually sweet potatoes.

### Health Connection

- Sweet potatoes are part of the red/orange group in the MyPlate vegetable group. This group is important for our eyes and skin as it has a lot of Vitamin A. Reinforce with super goggles. (Use your fingers to make goggles for your eyes.)
- Sweet potatoes have a lot of Vitamin C, which is important to help cuts heal and keep us healthy. Reinforce with the Vitamin C shield by crossing arms in front of chest.

### References and Resources

<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/seasonal-produce-guide/sweet-potatoes-yams>

<https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/produce-item/sweet-potato-2/>

<https://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/Downloads.aspx>

[https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/growit\\_book4.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/growit_book4.pdf)

<https://ncsweetpotatoes.com/>

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/myplate>

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