

FRUIT OR VEGETABLE

What are we eating? Is it a root? Is it a stem? Is it a leaf? Is it a fruit? Is it a seed? Is it actually a vegetable? Few adults can answer this question correctly. The confusion lies with what is a definition and what is the scientific definition between what a fruit is and what a vegetable is. If a food is sweet or served as dessert, it is considered a fruit. Actually, there is a scientific botanical definition of fruits. In laymen's terms, if it has a seed or is a seed it is, botanically, the fruit of the plant. So, grains are plant fruits. Tomatoes are plant fruits. Cucumbers, squash, and pumpkins are all plant fruits. This can confuse students because they think of cucumbers and squash as vegetables. To make matters even more confusing if you use MyPlate, it categorizes many fruits as vegetables because that is how they are prepared and eaten.

Make sure you explain to students the difference between the botanical definition and the common use definition of fruits and vegetables.

So, what are vegetables? Vegetables are the vegetative part of the plant (root, stem, leaves and flower) and the reproductive part of the plant before they bloom and set fruit and seed.

Activity 1: Discuss with students the difference between fruits and vegetables. Using a T-Chart, categorize “vegetables” as either botanically a fruit or a vegetable.

Fruit	Vegetable
Tomato	Lettuce
Squash	Potatoes
Pecan	Cabbage
Olive	Celery
Avocado	Radish
Blueberries	Broccoli
Citrus	

Activity 2: Use the diagram of a flowering plant to explain or review with students the different parts of the plant and the role each part of the plant plays in the plant's survival.

- Flower - Flowers are the reproductive part of the plant. Pollen is produced by the male part of the plant to fertilize the female part. Some flowers have only male parts (stamen) and some only female parts (pistil) and some have both. The seeds and/or fruit form in the flower. **Broccoli**
- Stem - The stem supports the upper portion of the plant. Water and nutrients from the soil travel up the stem and food made in the leaves travels down. **Potato (modified stem)**
- Leaves - Photosynthesis takes place in the leaves which is how the plant makes food. Leaves absorb solar energy from the sun to turn carbon dioxide and water into food. **Lettuce and Cabbage**
- Leaf Petiole - The leaf petiole is the structure that holds the leaf to the stem or branch. It is the pipeline that moves the food made in the leaf to the rest of the plant. **Celery**
- Roots - The roots anchor the plant into the soil, as well as take in water and nutrients. Many plants store their extra food in the roots such as carrots. **Radish**

Extension: Using a paper plate, glue a picture of the flowering plant onto the front for each student or group of students. If available, use vegetables from school garden. If not use potatoes (small or cut them into pieces), celery (cut into small pieces), a head of lettuce (or bag of smaller leaves) and a head of cabbage and a bunch of radishes (cut in half.) Ask the students to place the vegetable on the correct part of the plant on the paper plate.

For a healthy snack have the student create lettuce wraps using the vegetables and dip the wrap in ranch dressing.

*This activity coordinates with *Gardening for Nutrition's* 'What We Eat - Part 1 and 2' lessons as well as *Gardening for Grades'* 'What are We Eating.'

