Raven Tree Press LLC

Children's Bilingual Picture Books

Activity Guide #1

The Riches of Rangoberra / Las riquezas de Rangoberra

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Subjects
Art
Science
Home Economics/Cooking

Brief Description
In this science and art activity, children work individually or in groups to learn about herbs and their various uses. A Renaissance girl, the handmaiden in *The Riches of Rangoberra* uses remnants of cloth to make a quilt that becomes the treasure of the kingdom. The use of herbs was quite prevalent in the Renaissance Era. Author Jane Weber makes herbal "dream pillows" and sachets to ease sleepers to dreamland. Modern herb usage is explored in these lessons.

Objectives
- Gain knowledge of the Renaissance period
- Incorporate the many uses of herbs into everyday products.

Key Words
Herbs, sewing art project, Renaissance

Grade Level(s)
K-5

Materials Needed
Various herbs
Containers for planting herbs
Oven, stove, cooking utensils

Activities
Commonly, "herb" refers to any plant or plant part valued for its medicinal, savory, or aromatic qualities. In many cases, herbs' oils and compounds that cause healing, good flavors, or aromas, are merely adaptations that help the particular plant survive in its environment. Humans take advantage of these plant adaptations for our own uses much as we take advantage of flowers (adaptations for pollination) for their beauty.

- Have children use their senses to compare six potted plants including, for instance, a spider plant, parsley, jade, rosemary, lettuce, and thyme. Then ask them to organize the plants into groups with similar attributes, and let other children guess how the groups were categorized.

- Have children taste six edible leaves spinach, basil, lettuce, rosemary, thyme, and cabbage and describe the tastes of each. Ask: Which ones might you eat a bowl of? Why or why not? How could you imagine using the others?
- Invite children to try to match aromas of fresh herbs with dried.
- Share the fact that herbs contain oils which create the odors and flavors we experience. After smelling several herbs, have students guess how such odors might help the plants survive in their environment? (Hint: the odors can both attract helpful insects and repel "pests.")
- Go through a series of recipe books to find recipes with their particular herbs. Each child created a book that included drawings, observations, research reports, and a variety of recipes for his or her herb. The books and plants made informative, aromatic Mothers' Day gifts.
- Explore the use of herbs in different cultures and cook an international meal.
- Create a cookbook of your favorite herb recipes.
- Cook two batches of spaghetti sauce, one with and one without herbs. Compare the tastes.
- Make aromatic herbal "sachets" or catnip toys from dried herbs in fabric pouches.
- Research and practice some herbal dyeing. Indoor garden herbs that are good for dyeing include: catnip, marigolds, marjoram, morning glories, parsley, rosemary, sage, and zinnias.
- Devise ways to capture and retain the smell of one of your fresh herbs.
- Investigate whether cats really go wild over catnip. Grow some of this mint, then design a fair test to see if cats prefer it to other members of the mint family like peppermint, spearmint, and basil.
- Design a "smell test" using aromatic herbs to compare the abilities of different people to discriminate among them.
- Find out about the culinary, cosmetic, and craft uses of herbs by people in a time period or culture you're studying. For example: Pilgrims, Pioneer Days, Native American Life, Ancient Greece, the Middle Ages, the Victorian Era, etc.
- Herbs have been used for thousands of years to perfume our bodies and homes. They're used to cleanse, protect, and invigorate our skin and hair. Have children try some of the following:
- Survey soaps, shampoo, cosmetics, lotions in stores or in the house to identify herbal ingredients.
- Make scented oils by soaking fresh blossoms or leaves of herbs such as mints, lavender, or rose in vegetable oil. Remove the herbs after 24 hours and replace with fresh herbs. Continue this each day for a week. You'll have a lightly scented oil for skin and bath.
- Write to or visit a company that makes natural cosmetics to find out more about what herbs are being used today.
- Create your own herbal recipes to cure common maladies, e.g., writers' cramp from too much homework.
- Interview a pharmacist to find out which medicines used today are made from plants.
- Herbs...the green flecks in spaghetti sauce, the soothing late night teas, the dried mixtures that keep the bathroom air fresh. But did you know that many prescription medicines contain drugs derived from natural herbs? Or that many perfumes and other fragrances are made from the oils in herbs?
- Herbs have been used for at least 5,000 years by all cultures for cooking, medicine, crafts, and cosmetics. Many herbs are easy to raise in the classroom. Herbs have such rich histories and so many uses that they can provide an enticing, multi sensory theme for learning science concepts and skills, studying other cultures, and tying in subjects across the curriculum.

Activity Guide Source
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