



Dear Families:

A natural foods educator with the Midwest Food Connection will be visiting our classroom a total of four times this Spring to teach their lesson series, “Urban Farming.” Sponsored by Twin Cities Natural Foods Co-ops, we have the wonderful opportunity to study a wide variety of seasonal foods and sustainable practices used in growing them. Here is a brief description of the lessons your child will receive:

1. **Ins and Outs of Seedlings** — A seed is a miracle waiting to happen! But here in the Northland our growing season is short, so let’s not wait. Children get busy planting seeds indoors to discover the advantages of extending our growing season as they care for and prepare the seedlings for transplant outside in the garden.
2. **Planning your Garden** — Every child can have a garden, be it in a window box, in a side yard, or at a nearby community garden. Our lesson teaches about creating good soil, finding the sun, and laying it all out. Food tasting included.
3. **Buzz on Bugs** — Children learn the important work many insects do and why good gardeners are careful not to harm them. Learn to do the bee waggle dance, sing about ladybugs, and have a treat. Think like an organic farmer and outsmart the pests without using pesticides.
4. **Spring Harvest** — This lesson explores the first tidbits of taste from Minnesota gardens. Early herbs, baby greens, and daring sprouts make for fun salads and spreads. Once again, we inspire kids to grow their own!

At the grocery store, or while cooking -- to reinforce lesson content -- parents are encouraged to ask their children to point out, maybe explain, some of the foods they have been exploring at school each Thursday. Also, listed below are a few questions you could ask your children that directly correspond to the lessons listed above (in that order):

**Primary Questions (grades K-2)**

1. What do seeds need to grow? What are reasons for growing your own garden?
2. What can you add to soil to make it “rich?”
3. What is a beneficial insect? What does a “pest” do to plants?
4. What are at least two of the first veggies that come up in the spring in Minnesota?

**Intermediate Questions (grades 3-5)**

1. What can gardeners in Minnesota do to “extend” the growing season?
2. What do you need to know about the sun when choosing where to place your garden?
3. List and describe two beneficial insects. Describe a natural way to deter pests.
4. What are at least four of the first veggies that come up in the spring in Minnesota?