

Produce Sorting

Overview Using a number of crops and varieties within a single crop, students will sort produce to understand crop, type, and variety characteristics.

Standards (NYS): Science: 1, 4.1, 4.3

Objectives To learn about the relationships among crop, type, and variety.

- Materials**
- Local produce – 2 or more varieties of several crops
 - Baskets for sorting
 - Paring knife
 - Cutting board



- Instructions**
1. Gather vegetable varieties of at least two or more vegetable crops from a farm stand or another location that can identify the produce down to variety. Often the grocery store does not supply such details. If you have enough varieties, you could even use one crop. For example, during peak season, an assortment of cherry tomato varieties provides a nice look at diversity within a crop and type.
 2. Place produce in basket or bucket.
 3. Ask participants to sort them into their proper crops, then into types (if applicable), and then varieties. Step aside and let participants struggle with this challenge alone. Step in occasionally with an encouraging word such as, “Great job! You only have two out of place.”
 4. Ask youth why they think the varieties look different, how they imagine they taste, etc.
 5. Read the variety names and see if the youth can guess the right name for each variety.
 6. Cut and prepare the produce for a taste test. Were their hypotheses on taste correct, or were they surprised? Why might people grow some of these unusual varieties?

Taking it Further Seed Sorting: If fresh produce is unavailable, substitute seed packages with variety pictures.