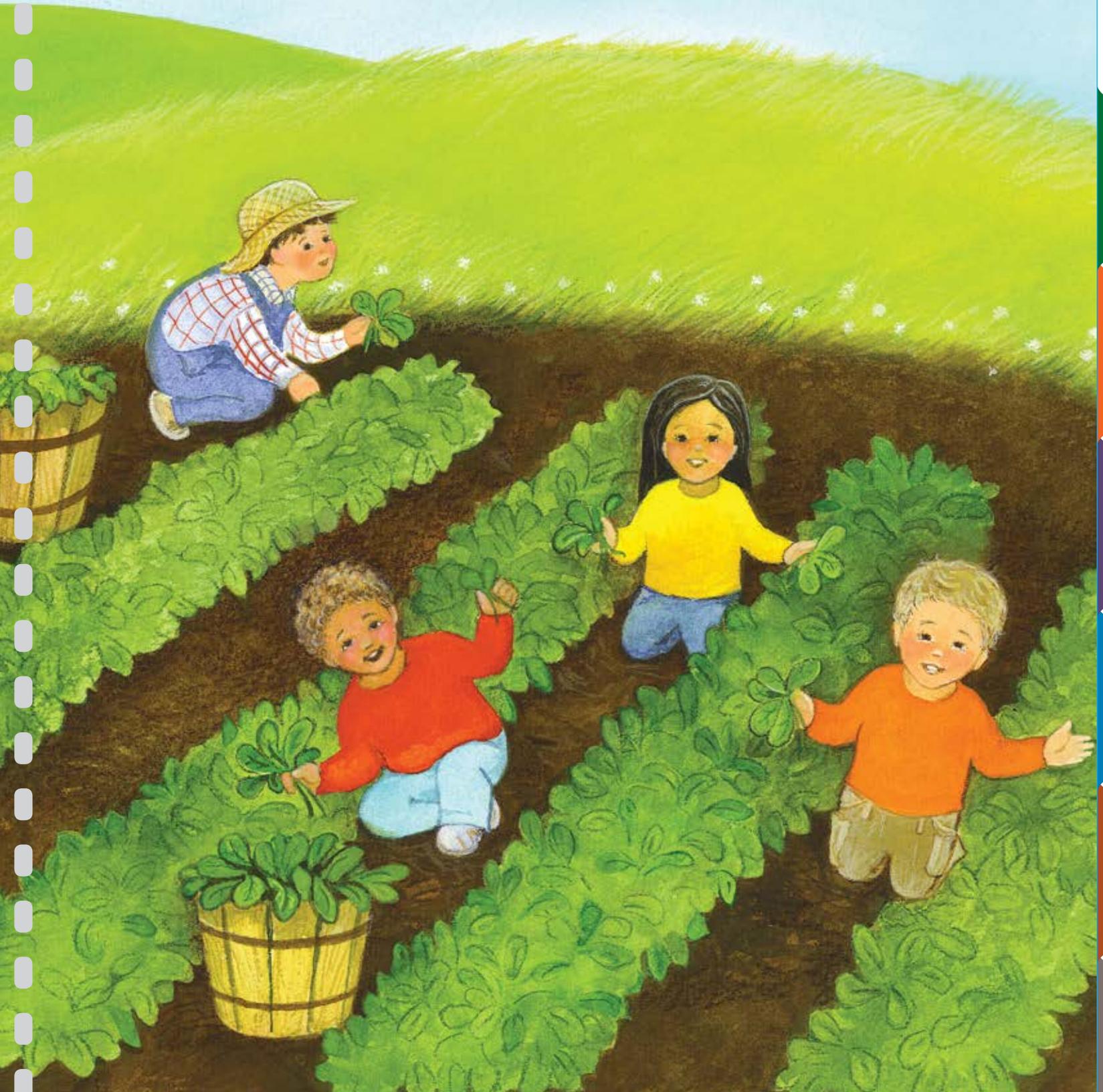


# Spinach Lane



SPINACH

CANTALOUPE

SQUASH

PEACH

POTATO

APPENDIXES

# WELCOME TO Spinach Lane at Tasty Acres Farm!



Spinach is a dark-green, leafy vegetable. Through the activities in this unit, children will explore spinach, experiencing how spinach leaves look, feel, smell, and taste.

Spinach grows quickly, and hands-on planting activities will help children learn that seeds produce these flavorful plants. Grow some spinach and have a harvest. See how bunches of spinach go from the farm to the store and farmers market. Leave time to tempt the taste buds with spinach dips, salads, and more tasty options. Children also have many opportunities to try spinach throughout the unit. Growing at Home materials allow families to share in the sweet rewards.

## WHAT'S INSIDE

<b>Introduction to Spinach Lane Activities</b> .....	<b>78</b>
<b>Getting To Know Spinach</b> .....	<b>79</b>
<b>Growing at Home: Spinach</b> .....	<b>80</b>

### DAY 1

<b>An Adventure Stems From Learning About Spinach</b> .....	<b>83</b>
---	-----------

- MYSTERY BOX OR BAG ACTIVITY  
One Touch, One Guess..... 84
- CRAFT ACTIVITY  
Spinach Leaf Print ..... 86
- TASTING ACTIVITY  
Quick Quesadilla ..... 87

### DAY 2

<b>Spinach: Where Do You Come From and How Do We Eat You?</b> .....	<b>89</b>
---	-----------

- GROWING ACTIVITY  
Spinach Start as Seeds..... 90
- TASTING ACTIVITY  
Spinach Flowers..... 91
- CRAFT ACTIVITY  
Garden Stones..... 92
- MOVEMENT ACTIVITY  
"Spinach Says" ..... 94

### DAY 3

<b>Sowing and Songs</b> .....	<b>95</b>
-------------------------------	-----------

- GROWING ACTIVITY  
Plant a Spinach Seed in a Cup ..... 96
- >> OPTIONAL ACTIVITY  
Grow a Seedling in a Bag ..... 98

- MOVEMENT ACTIVITY  
Old MacDonald Had a Farm, Spinach Style..... 99
- TASTING ACTIVITY  
Spinach Salad ..... 101

### DAY 4

<b>Spinach: How Do You Grow?</b> .....	<b>103</b>
--	------------

- GROWING ACTIVITY  
Plant Spinach Outdoors..... 104
- >> OPTIONAL ACTIVITY  
Make a Seed Tape..... 106
- CRAFT ACTIVITY  
Stamped Wrapping Paper..... 107
- READING ACTIVITY..... 108

### DAY 5

<b>Introducing MyPlate</b> .....	<b>109</b>
----------------------------------	------------

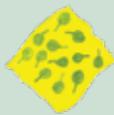
- FOOD GROUP ACTIVITY  
Green Leafy Vegetables..... 110
- MOVEMENT ACTIVITY  
Active Spinach Stretch..... 114
- TASTING ACTIVITY  
Spinach Egg Bake..... 116

<b>Fun Extras</b> .....	<b>118</b>
-------------------------	------------

- Spinach Drawings..... 119
- Activity Sheets
  - Spinach Blackline Master..... 121
  - Spinach Dot-to-Dot..... 122
  - Where Does Spinach Grow?..... 123
  - Spinach Puzzle Pieces..... 124



# Spinach Activity Chart

DAY 1 55-60 minutes	DAY 2 50-60 minutes	DAY 3 50 minutes	DAY 4 50-65 minutes	DAY 5 45-55 minutes
<b>MYSTERY BOX OR BAG</b>	<b>GROWING ACTIVITY</b>	<b>GROWING ACTIVITY</b>	<b>GROWING ACTIVITY</b>	<b>FOOD GROUP ACTIVITY</b>
<p>One Touch, One Guess</p> <p>15 minutes</p> 	<p>Spinach Starts as Seeds</p> <p>10 minutes</p>	<p>Plant a Spinach Seed in a Cup</p> <p>15 minutes</p> 	<p>Plant Spinach Outdoors</p> <p>15 minutes</p>	<p>Leafy Green Vegetables</p> <p>20-25 minutes</p>
<b>CRAFT ACTIVITY</b>	<b>TASTING ACTIVITY</b>	<b>OPTIONAL ACTIVITY</b>	<b>OPTIONAL ACTIVITY</b>	<b>MOVEMENT ACTIVITY</b>
<p>Spinach Leaf Print</p> <p>15 minutes</p> 	<p>Spinach Flowers</p> <p>10 minutes</p>	<p>Grow a Seedling in a Bag</p> <p>10 minutes</p>	<p>Make a Seed Tape</p> <p>15-20 minutes</p>	<p>Active Spinach Stretch</p> <p>10 minutes</p>
<b>TASTING ACTIVITY</b>	<b>CRAFT ACTIVITY</b>	<b>MOVEMENT ACTIVITY</b>	<b>CRAFT ACTIVITY</b>	<b>TASTING ACTIVITY</b>
<p>Quick Quesadilla</p> <p>25-30 minutes</p>	<p>Garden Stones</p> <p>20-30 minutes</p>	<p>Old MacDonald Had a Farm, Spinach Style</p> <p>10 minutes</p>	<p>Stamped Wrapping Paper</p> <p>10 minutes</p> 	<p>Spinach Egg Bake</p> <p>15-20 minutes</p> 
	<b>MOVEMENT ACTIVITY</b>	<b>TASTING ACTIVITY</b>	<b>READING ACTIVITY</b>	
	<p>"Spinach Says"</p> <p>10 minutes</p> 	<p>Spinach Salad</p> <p>15 minutes</p>	 <p>10-20 minutes</p>	





# Introduction to Spinach Lane Activities

Check with local farms and farmers markets to find out when spinach is in peak season. In most areas, spinach is a spring and early summer crop. Seeing spinach growing in the field makes a great field trip. If a farm is not nearby, visit a produce stand or farmers market to see fresh spinach. Your local grocery store may also have fresh spinach.

The spinach lessons in this unit are arranged by day to teach over the course of 5 consecutive days. If possible, do the planting activities and enjoy homegrown spinach for several weeks. It is an easy vegetable to grow and can be planted in a garden bed or container. Planting and watching a plant grow can be an enjoyable activity for children.

## ACTIVITY LENGTH

Most activities require only 10–15 minutes.

## CREDITING TIPS

Some activities in this unit include children eating spinach. Check for food allergies before serving. If you plan to serve spinach as part of a reimbursable meal or snack for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), check the minimum serving sizes for each age group (Appendix G, page 330). There are also Crediting Tips with some of the recipes. If you plan to serve those as part of a reimbursable meal or snack, refer to the Crediting Tips for guidance.

For information on purchasing the correct amount of spinach, see USDA's Food Buying Guide at <https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov>.

## WORDS TO GROW

New Words To Use When Teaching About Spinach

<b>Vegetables</b>	<b>Green</b>
<b>Leaves</b>	<b>Smooth</b>
<b>Stems</b>	<b>Bumpy</b>

## LUNCH AND SUPPER MEAL PATTERNS

	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5
Milk	½ cup	¾ cup
Meat and meat alternates	1 oz eq	1 ½ oz eq
Vegetables	⅛ cup	¼ cup
Fruits	⅛ cup	¼ cup
Grains*	½ oz eq	½ oz eq

\*Starting October 1, 2019, ounce equivalents (oz eq) must be used to determine the amount of credible grains.

## SNACK MEAL PATTERNS

Select 2 of the 5 components for snack

	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5
Milk	½ cup	½ cup
Meat and meat alternates	½ oz eq	½ oz eq
Vegetables	½ cup	½ cup
Fruits	½ cup	½ cup
Grains*	½ oz eq	½ oz eq

\*Starting October 1, 2019, ounce equivalents (oz eq) must be used to determine the amount of credible grains.



# Getting To Know Spinach



Spinach is a type of leafy green vegetable, similar to chard or kale, which can be eaten raw or cooked. Spinach is easy to find in the grocery store year round and can be purchased fresh, frozen, or canned. You can purchase pre-washed, fresh spinach in bags or containers, and bunches of spinach are easy to wash at home using a colander or salad spinner.

## GROWING GUIDE

Spinach is easy to grow in a lot of different parts of the United States. It prefers cooler temperatures and will grow best in the spring and the fall. For a spring harvest, plant seeds outdoors about 2 weeks before the last frost. Keep the soil moist, but avoid over watering. The spinach leaves will be ready to harvest about 40 days after planting. Plant in mid-August for a fall crop, ensuring that soil temperatures are cool enough.

## HOW SHOULD I STORE MY SPINACH?

Refrigerate after harvest and use within 3-5 days. Store it dry and rinse the leaves with cold water before eating.

## SIX SIMPLE WAYS TO SERVE SPINACH

1. Fresh spinach leaves added to a fruit smoothie.
2. Spinach leaves mixed with other types of lettuce leaves for a greener salad.
3. Fresh spinach leaves in a sandwich, in place of lettuce.
4. Chopped and added to vegetable soup.
5. Sautéed with lemon juice and vegetable oil for a tasty side dish.
6. Used as an ingredient in omelets, quiches, lasagna, casseroles, or on pizza.



# Spinach

Please provide a print copy (or email a digital copy) of Growing at Home to families before, during, or after completing the Spinach activities. Sharing the handout and recipes is a great way to keep families engaged and informed about what their children are learning during the day.

Content from the handout can also be displayed on a family bulletin board, or shared on your website.

**In addition to the ideas above, text, tweet, or share daily spinach lesson highlights with the families.**



## MESSAGES FOR FAMILIES

### DAY ONE

- Today your child learned that spinach is the color green. #GrowIt
- Today your child tried a Quesadilla. We are sending the recipe home. #GrowIt

### DAY TWO

- Today your child learned that spinach grows from seeds. #GrowIt
- Today your child learned that spinach needs soil, sun, time, and water to grow. #GrowIt
- Today your child learned that spinach grows in about 40 days. #GrowIt

### DAY THREE

- Today your child tasted spinach salad! #GrowIt

### DAY FOUR

- Today we read a book that had fruits and vegetables as part of the story. Ask your child to describe his or her favorite part. #GrowIt
- Today your child planted spinach seeds. #GrowIt

### DAY FIVE

- Today your child learned about the MyPlate food groups. Ask your child which food group spinach is in. #GrowIt
- Looking for ways to include more veggies at meals? Try our Spinach Egg Bake <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it-homes>. #GrowIt





**PREPARATION TIME**

20 minutes

**COOKING TIME**

20 minutes

**MAKES**

6 servings

**SAFETY NOTE**

To prevent choking, make sure to lightly mash up the kidney beans.

**NUTRIENTS PER SERVING**

Calories .....	203
Protein .....	14 g
Carbohydrate .....	26 g
Total Fat .....	6 g
Saturated Fat .....	2 g
Cholesterol .....	0 mg
Iron .....	2 mg
Calcium .....	157 mg
Sodium .....	442 mg
Dietary Fiber .....	6 g

# Quick Quesadilla

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 ¼ cups spinach, frozen, chopped (2 ¼ cups thawed and drained yields 1 ½ cups)
- 1 cup dark red kidney beans, canned, no salt added, drained and rinsed or kidney beans, dry cooked
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder
- 4 whole grain-rich tortillas, 8-inches
- 1 ½ cups mozzarella cheese, low-fat, shredded



- Nonstick cooking spray
- Forks, plates, and napkins

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Thaw, drain, and squeeze excess liquid from spinach.
2. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
3. Place kidney beans in a small microwavable bowl.
4. Add garlic powder, onion powder, and chili powder.
5. Lightly mash beans by squeezing using gloved hands (at least 50% of the beans should appear whole). Be careful not to over-mash beans.
6. Heat in microwave for 1 minute. Stir with a spoon.
7. Prepare quesadillas: Place half of the tortillas on a baking sheet. Spread ¾ cup of spinach on each tortilla. Top each with ¾ cup of bean mixture and ¾ cup of cheese.
8. Place remaining tortillas on top.
9. Spray outside of filled quesadillas with nonstick cooking spray.
10. Bake for 15 minutes. Heat quesadillas to an internal temperature of 140 °F or higher for at least 15 seconds.
11. Cut each quesadilla into 6 wedges.
12. Serve 2 wedges or ½ quesadilla.

**COOKING WITH CHILDREN**

Young children can:

- Mash the kidney beans with a fork.
- Measure the seasonings and cheese.
- Spread the ingredients on the tortillas before baking.
- Help add the top tortilla.



# An Adventure Stems From Learning About Spinach

## ACTIVITY OVERVIEW



### MYSTERY BOX OR BAG ACTIVITY

One Touch, One Guess

Pages 84–85

15 minutes



### CRAFT ACTIVITY

Spinach Leaf Print

Page 86

15 minutes



### TASTING ACTIVITY

Quick Quesadilla

Pages 87–88

25–30 minutes





## ACTIVITY LENGTH

15 minutes

### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Review Make a Mystery Box or Bag, as needed (Basics, pages 11–12).
- Rinse spinach leaves, at least three leaves per student. One pre-washed leaf per child for touching activity and the remainder for the Mystery Box or Bag activity.
- Place a handful of spinach leaves in the Mystery Box or Bag. Keep the rest of the leaves out of the sight of children, but have available in case “enthusiastic feelers” damage the leaves in the box and more are needed.
- Make copies of Growing at Home: Spinach, one set per child (pages 81–82), or draft an email for families. The Growing at Home resource includes the Quick Quesadilla recipe that the children will taste today.
- Review allergen information (Appendix E: Food Allergies, page 326) and check with families about food allergies.
- Have the children wash their hands before and after activity (Appendix D: Hand Washing, page 325)

## MYSTERY BOX OR BAG ACTIVITY

# One Touch, One Guess

Use the Mystery Box or Bag to create interest and excite their sense of touch. Have the children feel spinach leaves in the box or bag before revealing the “mystery” item to all.

### OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Identify spinach as a lightweight, green leafy vegetable; and
- Describe the appearance and smell of spinach.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

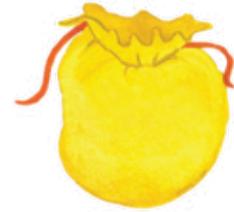
- Fresh spinach leaves
- Mystery Box or Bag
- Paper and pencil or pen
- Craft feather (*optional*)

### BEFORE THE ACTIVITY—HAND WASHING AND POLITE TASTING

- Explain that we should always wash our hands before preparing and eating food. Have the children wash their hands (Appendix D: Hand Washing, page 325).
- Remind the children about polite food-tasting habits (Appendix C: Polite Food Tasting—Be Kind, page 324).

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Introduce the Mystery Box or Bag, or reintroduce it if you have used it before (see Basics, page 11).
- One at a time, ask each child to come and feel inside the box or bag without looking. If a child seems afraid, feel inside the box or bag with the child.
- Ask each child to describe quietly to you what he or she feels.
- After everyone has guessed, show the spinach to the children.
- Note the children’s guesses that were close (a leaf, a plant, lettuce, food) or correct (spinach).
- Offer each child a clean leaf of spinach to look at, touch, and smell.



- Talk about the spinach. Ask the questions below and any other questions you like.
  - Is spinach a fruit or a vegetable? (Vegetable)
  - What color is it? (Dark green)
  - Do the leaves feel thick or thin? (Thin)
  - How does the outside of it feel? (Smooth and bumpy)
  - Is the spinach leaf light or heavy? (Very light like a feather—let children feel the feather)
  - Is it soft or hard? (Soft like the leaf from a tree)
  - Is the stem on the spinach leaf thick or thin? (Thin)
  - Has anyone ever tasted a spinach leaf? (Yes or no)
  - When you bite or tear the spinach leaf, what color do you see inside? (Green)
  - If the children are fond of dinosaurs, ask what kind of dinosaurs might eat spinach? (Plant Eaters/Herbivores)

### TIME TO TASTE!

- Conclude the lesson by inviting the children to taste the spinach leaf.
- Ask the children:
  - Is the leaf soft or chewy? (Chewy)
  - How does the spinach taste?



### OFFER BITES, NOT BUSHELS

A child can be overwhelmed by a large portion and may even refuse to try a food, fearing it must be finished. Offer small tastes and be willing to offer more if a child desires to taste again. A child should be encouraged, but not pressured, to taste the new food. Caregivers are strongly encouraged to be a role model and enjoy the spinach with the children.

### WORDS TO GROW

<b>Vegetable</b>	<b>Bumpy</b>
<b>Green</b>	<b>Smooth</b>
<b>Leaf or Leaves</b>	<b>Stem</b>
<b>Light (weight)</b>	





## ACTIVITY LENGTH

15 minutes

### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Organize materials.

### MIXED-AGES TIP

*Grow It! Buddies* can help a younger children make a leaf print. *Grow It! Buddies* can create a pattern from multiple leaf prints.

## CRAFT ACTIVITY

# Spinach Leaf Print



The children make a print of a spinach leaf and learn the parts of the plant.

### OBJECTIVE

The children will be able to:

- Identify spinach as a lightweight, dark green leafy vegetable.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Plain white paper, one sheet per child
- Spinach leaves (choose bigger leaves with larger veins; baby spinach may be too delicate for this activity)
- Crayons or colored pencils in shades of green
- Spinach *Grow It! Cards*

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Seat each child at a table with supplies.
- Show a drawing of a spinach leaf (page 119) or spinach *Grow It! Cards* to the children. Talk with the children about what spinach looks like. Review the shape (round at one end, coming to a point) and color (green) of spinach.
- Have each child take a piece of paper. Have each child fold the paper in half; assist any children needing help.
- Ask the children to put one leaf of spinach inside the fold of the paper. Instruct the children to rub the crayon or pencil gently on the top of the paper covering the leaf. As the leaf is rubbed, the details of the leaf will appear. Assist those children who need help.
- After the leaf print is made, remove the spinach leaf from the paper. Have the children look at the leaf print and notice the stem, outline, and any veins of the spinach leaf that are visible.



*Spinach Grow It! Cards*



## TASTING ACTIVITY

# Quick Quesadilla

The children will taste a yummy quesadilla made with frozen spinach.

### OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Describe the appearance, smell, and taste of spinach; and
- Understand that all of the spinach can be eaten including the leaf and stem.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Quick Quesadilla (recipe, page 88)
- Package of frozen spinach (in addition to what is used in the recipe)
- Plates and napkins

### BEFORE THE ACTIVITY—HAND WASHING AND POLITE TASTING

- Explain that we should always wash our hands before preparing and eating food. Have the children wash their hands (Appendix D: Hand Washing, page 325).
- Remind the children about polite food-tasting habits (Appendix C: Polite Food Tasting—Be Kind, page 324).

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Have the children gather around and review what was learned about spinach already.
- Tell the children spinach grows on the ground. We have to rinse the leaves to remove soil and germs before we eat it.
- Tell the children that sometimes the farmers wash fresh spinach they picked from the ground and freeze the spinach so that we can use it all year long.
- Show the children the container of frozen spinach and cut the bag or box open to reveal the spinach inside. If they want to, let the children feel or taste a small piece of the frozen spinach. Explain that it is frozen, so it may taste different than the fresh leaves they have tried before.
- Talk with the children about the frozen spinach. Ask the following questions and any additional questions if you like.
  - What color is the frozen spinach? (Green)
  - Is this the same color as the fresh spinach leaves? (Yes)
  - What does the frozen spinach feel like? (Cold)
  - Are the frozen spinach leaves bigger or smaller than the fresh spinach leaves? (Smaller)
- Tell the children that you are all going to taste a yummy quesadilla made with the frozen spinach.

### TIME TO TASTE!

- Serve the Quick Quesadilla (recipe, page 88).
- Be a healthy role model! Enjoy the quesadilla with the children.



### ACTIVITY LENGTH

25 30 minutes

### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Review allergen information (Appendix E: Food Allergies, page 326) and check with families about food allergies.

### WORDS TO GROW

Slice	Firm
Smooth	Cheese
Crunchy	Cold
Round	



## PREPARATION TIME

20 minutes

## COOK TIME

20 minutes

## MAKES

6 servings

## CACFP CREDITING INFORMATION

2 wedges ( $\frac{1}{3}$  quesadilla) provides Legume as Meat Alternate: 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz equivalent meat alternate,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup vegetable, and 1 oz equivalent grains OR Legume as Vegetable: 1 oz equivalent meat alternate,  $\frac{3}{8}$  cup vegetable, and 1 oz equivalent grains. For more information on the CACFP meal patterns, see Appendix G, page 330.

## SAFETY NOTE

To prevent choking, make sure to lightly mash up the kidney beans.

## NUTRIENTS PER SERVING

Calories .....	203
Protein .....	14 g
Carbohydrate .....	26 g
Total Fat .....	6 g
Saturated Fat .....	2 g
Cholesterol .....	0 mg
Iron .....	2 mg
Calcium .....	157 mg
Sodium .....	442 mg
Dietary Fiber .....	6 g

## RECIPE

# Quick Quesadilla

*This is a USDA standardized recipe.*

## INGREDIENTS

- 2  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups spinach, frozen, chopped (2  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups thawed and drained yields 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups)
- 1 cup dark red kidney beans, canned, no salt added, drained and rinsed or kidney beans, dry cooked
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon onion powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon chili powder
- 4 whole grain-rich tortillas, 8-inches
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups mozzarella cheese, low-fat, shredded
- Nonstick cooking spray
- Forks, plates, and napkins (one per child)



## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Thaw, drain, and squeeze excess liquid from spinach.
2. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
3. Place kidney beans in a small microwavable bowl.
4. Add garlic powder, onion powder, and chili powder.
5. Lightly mash beans by squeezing using gloved hands (at least 50% of the beans should appear whole). Be careful not to over-mash beans.
6. Heat in microwave for 1 minute. Stir with a spoon.
7. Prepare quesadillas: Place half of the tortillas on a baking sheet. Spread  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of spinach on each tortilla. Top each with  $\frac{3}{8}$  cup of bean mixture and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of cheese.
8. Place remaining tortillas on top.
9. Spray outside of filled quesadillas with nonstick cooking spray.
10. Bake for 15 minutes. Heat quesadillas to an internal temperature of 140 °F or higher for at least 15 seconds.
11. Cut each quesadilla into 6 wedges.
12. Serve 2 wedges or  $\frac{1}{3}$  quesadilla for each child.

## COOKING WITH CHILDREN

Young children can:

- Mash the kidney beans with a fork.
- Measure the seasonings and cheese.
- Spread the ingredients on the tortillas before baking.
- Help add the top tortilla.



# Spinach: Where Do You Come From and How Do We Eat You?

## ACTIVITY OVERVIEW



**GROWING ACTIVITY**  
Spinach Starts as Seeds

Page 90  
10 minutes



**TASTING ACTIVITY**  
Spinach Flowers

Page 91  
10 minutes



**CRAFT ACTIVITY**  
Garden Stones

Pages 92-93  
20-30 minutes



**MOVEMENT ACTIVITY**  
"Spinach Says"

Page 94  
10 minutes





## ACTIVITY LENGTH

10 minutes

## WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Organize materials.

## WORDS TO GROW

Seeds	Soil
Plants	Sun
Water	

## GROWING ACTIVITY

# Spinach Start as Seeds

The children see and touch spinach seeds and learn how far apart to plant them.

## OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Describe how spinach grows from a seed into a plant that produces spinach; and
- Describe the resources needed to grow spinach.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Spinach seed packets
- Yardstick or two 12-inch rulers
- Clear cup so you can see seeds
- Spinach *Grow It! Cards*

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Tell the children they will learn about how spinach grows. Show the children the spinach seed packets. Ask them what they think is inside. Tell them people can buy packets of seeds to grow spinach in soil.
- Pass the seeds around in a clear cup (spinach seeds are small). Let the children touch and count the seeds. Explain that when spinach isn't picked for food, the plants grow flowers. The spinach seeds come from the tops of these flowers.
- Explain that the spinach seeds are planted about 6 inches apart and ½ to 1 inch deep in the soil, depending on the instructions provided on the seed packet. The spinach plants need room to spread out when they grow so the rows are planted 12 to 18 inches apart. Have two children hold the rulers between them to show the distance. Have the children return to the group. If planting in a pot or small garden, explain that it's okay to have just one row, or even just one seed.
- Explain that the spinach seeds are planted in the soil in the spring. The sun and rain help them grow into seedlings above the ground. The seedlings grow into bunches of spinach. If indoors, explain that they can plant the seeds anytime, but they must water the plants and put them near a window so the plants can grow.
- Explain that while spinach plants need sun to grow they also need to be in the shade when it gets really hot.
- Use the *Grow It! Cards* to show spinach growing in a field. Spinach grows fast. The leaves are ready to be picked when they are big enough to eat and reach full maturity about 40 days after the seeds are planted. Show children what 40 days looks like on a calendar.
- Explain that the entire spinach plant may be cut off just above the ground, or leaves can be picked individually starting from the outside.
- Explain that farmers pick spinach and eat it themselves or take it to a grocery store or a farmers market to sell. That is where other people buy it and take it home to eat.



## TASTING ACTIVITY

# Spinach Flowers

The children create flower-shaped snacks from spinach leaves. They explore the feel, smell, and taste of spinach.



### OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Tell that the entire spinach stem and leaf can be eaten; and
- Make a simple snack with spinach.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Spinach leaves, 6 to 8 leaves per child
- Low-fat ranch salad dressing or hummus
- Plates and napkins

### BEFORE THE ACTIVITY—HAND WASHING AND POLITE TASTING

- Explain that we should always wash our hands before preparing and eating food. Have the children wash their hands (Appendix D: Hand Washing, page 325).
- Remind children about polite food-tasting habits (Appendix C: Polite Food Tasting—Be Kind, page 324).



### INSTRUCTIONS

- Seat each child at a table with supplies.
- Explain that unless the spinach comes pre-rinsed, we should always rinse fresh spinach leaves under running water before it is cooked or eaten. Let the children know you have already washed the spinach.
- Tell the children that they are going to make a snack with spinach leaves. Give each child a clean plate with 6 to 8 spinach leaves.
- Let each child put a circle of dressing or hummus in the center of their paper plate, about the size of a quarter. Help those who need assistance.
- Show the children how to arrange the spinach leaves around the dressing to create the petals of a flower.
- After making the spinach flower, enjoy eating it. Invite the children to dip their spinach leaves in the dressing and eat them.
- As the children are eating, ask them to describe how the spinach:
  - smells (no smell or aroma similar to leaves or grass);
  - feels in the mouth (chewy); and
  - tastes (mild).



**ACTIVITY LENGTH**  
10 minutes

### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- If the spinach is not pre-rinsed, thoroughly rinse spinach leaves in a salad spinner or colander and dry leaves between sheets of paper towel.
- Prepare a plate for each child with the spinach leaves on the plate.
- Review allergen information (Appendix E: Food Allergies, page 326) and check with families about food allergies.

### WORDS TO GROW

<b>Leaves</b>	<b>Spinach</b>
<b>Flower</b>	<b>Dip</b>
<b>Petals</b>	<b>Stem</b>

### CACFP CREDITING TIP

There is not enough spinach provided in this activity to credit towards the CACFP meal pattern. This activity allows kids to try a small taste of spinach rather than a full vegetable portion. See our other recipes in this unit for ideas on serving spinach as part of a meal or snack.





## ACTIVITY LENGTH

20 30 minutes

## CRAFT ACTIVITY

# Garden Stones

### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Organize materials.
- Arrange for a well-ventilated spray area away from the children.



The children decorate garden stones.

### OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Engage with spinach in a fun and creative way; and
- Develop and strengthen their fine motor skills.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Spinach *Grow It! Cards*
- Smooth, round stones at least 4 inches in diameter
- Acrylic paints, light base colors and green for leaves
- Paint brushes, one per child
- Paper plates for paint
- Pencil, one per child
- Can of clear, spray shellac to seal and waterproof painted stones
- Puffy paint (*optional*)—puff paints have an interesting texture
- Smocks, large bibs, or an old t-shirt for each child, if desired

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Seat each child at a table with supplies.
- Ask the children “What is a garden?” If they do not know, explain that a garden is an area of soil where vegetables and fruits, like spinach, grow. Explain that sometimes people grow fruits and vegetables in gardens in their yards or in their communities. Fruits and vegetables also grow on farms in large areas of land called fields.



- Tell the children that garden stones are used to mark the place where different kinds of fruits and vegetables are planted in a garden because when seeds are planted in the ground, we can't see them anymore, until they start to grow. Explain that today they will make a garden stone decorated with a spinach leaf.
- Show the spinach *Grow It! Cards* to the children and keep them on display.
  - Talk with the children about how spinach looks.
  - Review with the children the shape and color of spinach.
- Give a stone to each child. Ask the children to paint the top and sides of their stone with a light-colored paint.
- While the stones dry, help the children wash the brushes. Play "Spinach Says" (page 94) while brushes and stones are drying.
- Help the children draw a large spinach leaf on the stone.
- Have them paint their leaf green. If the stone is large enough, also help them paint their initials on the stone.
- If the stones will be used outdoors, allow them to dry and then spray the stones with clear shellac to waterproof and seal. Always paint in a well-ventilated area.
- Allow stones to dry thoroughly.
- Have the children think of uses for the garden stones they made. Some ideas include:
  - Give to parents for home garden;
  - Use in a potted plant for decoration;
  - Use as a paper weight on a desk; or
  - Use in the garden at family child care.

## MIXED-AGES TIP

*Grow It! Buddies* can help younger children.





## ACTIVITY LENGTH

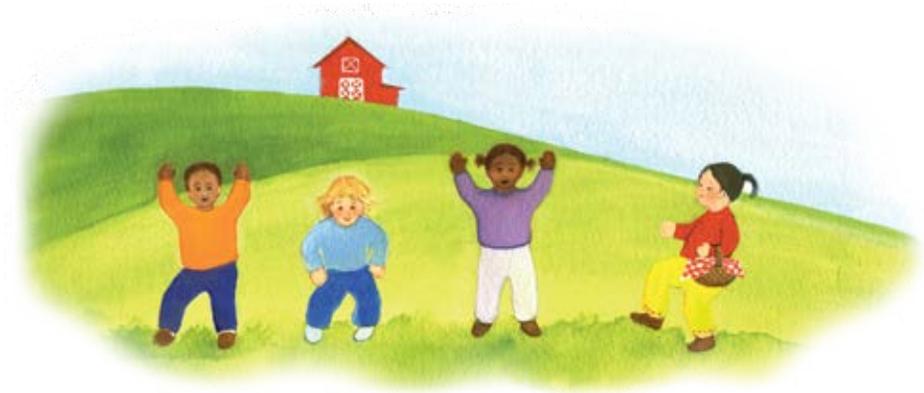
10 minutes

### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Organize materials.
- Clear or designate an open space for children to move about during the activity.

# MOVEMENT ACTIVITY

## "Spinach Says"



**"Spinach Says" is the Tasty Acres Farm version of a popular children's game.**

### OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Move and stretch during a group game;
- Follow instructions from a peer or adult; and
- Say that being physically active helps us feel good.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- *Optional:* Shirt, badge, or other accessory for the leader to wear that lets everyone know he or she is the Farmer.

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Have the children sit in a circle or stand in a group.
- Choose one person to be the Farmer (leader).
- The Farmer orders the other children to do all sorts of different and fun things, the funnier the better.
- But the Farmer's orders are only to be followed when they start with "Spinach says."
- When someone follows an order that doesn't begin with "Spinach says," that child is out of the game. However, make sure to keep the children moving even if they are "out." Ask them to stand off to the side and do different movements to find and pick spinach. For example, children can march through the fields, squat to find spinach, make large sweeping motions with their arms to pick up the spinach, skip home from the field, etc.
- Repeat until only one person is left. That person is the winner and can be the Farmer in the next round.



## ACTIVITY OVERVIEW



### GROWING ACTIVITY

Plant a Spinach Seed in a Cup

Pages 96–97

15 minutes



### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Grow a Seedling in a Bag

Page 98

10 minutes



### MOVEMENT ACTIVITY

Old MacDonald Had a Farm, Spinach Style

Pages 99–100

10 minutes



### TASTING ACTIVITY

Spinach Salad

Pages 101–102

15 minutes





## ACTIVITY LENGTH

15 minutes

## GROWING ACTIVITY

# Plant a Spinach Seed in a Cup

### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Prepare potting soil and divide into containers, one per table.
- Write "Spinach" on the wooden craft sticks.
- At the table(s), place a small paper cup, three seeds, and a plastic spoon per child.



The children plant spinach seeds in a soil-filled cup and learn what the seeds need to grow (see Appendix B, page 318, for more information on growing seedlings indoors). Children can check the cup daily to see the seeds progress. Once the plant becomes big enough, the children take their cups home.

### OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Describe the resources needed to grow spinach; and
- Experience planting a spinach seed.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Spinach seed packets (can be packets from Day 2)
- 5- to 6-ounce paper cups, one per child
- Potting soil
- Water for soil in a small spray bottle
- Plastic spoons or scoops, one per child
- Unsharpened pencils, with a line marking  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch
- Waterproof pens or markers
- Wooden craft sticks for plant markers, one per child
- Table covers, if desired
- Smocks for the children (*optional*)
- Sunny location and/or fluorescent lights if planning to grow plants indoors



## INSTRUCTIONS

- Help each child write his or her name on their cup.
- During the activity, help the children (or have older *Grow It! Buddies* help):
  - Fill their cups about three-quarters full with potting soil.
  - Gently tap the sides and bottom of their container with their index finger to settle but not pack the soil.
  - Poke three holes in the soil spaced around the cup. Use the marked, unsharpened pencil to make holes  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch deep.
  - Place a seed in each hole and gently cover the seeds with soil.
  - Lightly spray water over the top of the soil; help any children needing assistance.
  - If using wooden craft sticks as plant markers, write the name of the plant on the stick and place it in the soil close to the inside curve of the cup.
- During the activity, tell the children:
  - The seeds will grow in the potting soil just as plants grow in the earth's soil outside.
  - The seeds need soil, water, sun, and time to grow.
  - Inside, we can use lights to give plants warmth and light, just as the sun helps outside plants grow.
  - The seeds will grow first into very small plants (seedlings), then into larger plants. These larger plants, if planted outside in a garden, will continue to grow with sunlight and water. The plants will grow larger and eventually become bunches of spinach.
- Have the children set their cups in a sunny spot or under lights.
- Have the children check their cups every day to see the progress of the seeds growing into plants. Follow the care instructions on the seed packet. Water with spray bottle, as needed.





## ACTIVITY LENGTH

10 minutes

### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Locate a window with sunny southern or western exposure.
- Soak lima beans overnight. (See note below.)

### Green Thumb Guide

Lima beans and a sunny window are used in this activity to quickly show children how seeds sprout. However, to germinate seeds for growing, dark environments work best. (Not sure what germinate means? Check the Glossary in Appendix H, pages 331–332.)



## OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

# Grow a Seedling in a Bag



This activity can be done in place of or in addition to **Plant a Spinach Seed in a Cup** (see page 96). **A Seedling in a Bag** is a great way to help children see what is happening to the seed they planted in the soil. Check daily for progress and compare to the growth of the seeds in cups.

### OBJECTIVE

The children will be able to:

- Identify how seeds sprout.

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Plastic bag with a zipper-style closure (1 per child)
- Absorbent paper towel, 1–2 sheets per child
- Stapler with staples
- Dry lima beans, soaked in water overnight (several beans per child)
- Masking or strapping tape
- Window with sunny southern or western exposure

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Let the children help wet the paper towel well and place in a plastic bag.
- Place a row of staples across the center of the paper towel.
- Let the children help place soaked beans on top of the row of staples and seal the bag. The staples hold the seeds in place, allowing the roots to grow down and sprouts to grow up.
- Help the children tape the bags to the window, with the seed side facing the room. If possible, choose a window with sunny southern or western exposure.

**NOTE:** Soaking the lima beans overnight in water helps hydrate the beans and speeds the sprouting process. Lima beans will sprout fast, give quick results, and help keep the children's interest.





## MOVEMENT ACTIVITY

# Old MacDonald Had a Farm

### SPINACH STYLE

The children sing about growing and eating spinach and act out motions to this familiar tune.

#### OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Sing and act out motions to a familiar tune; and
- Say that being physically active helps us feel good.

#### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Spinach lyrics to “Old MacDonald Had a Farm”
- Large space for the children to move about

#### INSTRUCTIONS

- Lead the children in singing these new words to the tune “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” and demonstrate the suggested motions or make up new ones.
- Encourage the children to move about as they are singing.
- Explain that skipping, wiggling, stretching, running, jumping, and playing actively every day helps us to feel good and stay healthy.



**ACTIVITY LENGTH**  
10 minutes

#### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Become familiar with the words and motions of the song.

#### MIXED-AGES TIP

*Grow It! Buddies* can take turns leading the song.





# Old MacDonald Had a Farm, Spinach Style

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## 1ST VERSE

Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO! *(Skip in place)*  
On this farm he grew some spinach, EIEIO! *(Pretend to carry a basket of spinach)*  
Plant seed here and plant seeds there,  
Here seeds, there seeds, everywhere spinach seeds! *(Pretend to dig ground and plant using large, vigorous motions)*  
Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO! *(Skip in place)*

---

## 2ND VERSE

Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO! *(Skip in place)*  
On this farm he grew some spinach, EIEIO! *(Pretend to carry a basket of spinach)*  
With a little water here and a little water there,  
Here water, there water, everywhere water, water! *(Pretend to hold a watering can and water plants walking along the rows)*  
Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO! *(Skip in place)*

---

## 3RD VERSE

Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO! *(Skip in place)*  
On this farm he grew some spinach, EIEIO! *(Pretend to carry a basket of spinach)*  
Pick spinach here, and pick spinach there, *(Pretend to kneel and pick spinach)*  
Here a pick, there a pick, everywhere pick spinach *(Pretend to kneel and pick spinach)*  
Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO! *(Skip in place)*

---

## 4TH VERSE

Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO! *(Skip in place)*  
On this farm he grew some spinach, EIEIO! *(Pretend to carry a basket of spinach)*  
With a bite, bite here, and a bite, bite there, *(Pretend to eat spinach)*  
Here a bite, there a bite, everywhere a crunchy bite. *(Pretend to eat spinach)*  
Old MacDonald had a farm, EIEIO! *(Skip in place)*



## TASTING ACTIVITY

# Spinach Salad

Discuss spinach facts with the children and have them try a simple way to eat spinach.



### OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Describe how spinach is grown, harvested, and eaten; and
- Understand that the entire spinach stem and leaf can be eaten.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Spinach leaves
- Light Italian Dressing
- Plates, forks, and napkins
- Spinach *Grow It!* Cards

### BEFORE THE ACTIVITY—HAND WASHING AND POLITE TASTING

- Explain that we should always wash our hands before preparing and eating food. Have the children wash their hands (Appendix D: Hand Washing, page 325).
- Remind the children about polite food-tasting habits (Appendix C: Polite Food Tasting—Be Kind, page 324).

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Gather the children and lead a discussion about spinach.
- Use the spinach *Grow It!* Cards to show spinach growing and ready to eat.
- Tell the children that spinach is a vegetable with thin stems that grows from the ground.
- Ask some of the following questions:
  - Is spinach a fruit or a vegetable? (Vegetable)
  - What color is spinach? (Green)
  - What helps hold the leaves up? (Stems)
  - How do spinach leaves feel? (Smooth and bumpy)
  - Where does spinach grow? (On a farm or in a garden)
  - Does spinach grow in bunches above or below the ground? (Above the ground)
  - Where can our families buy spinach after it is picked and shipped from the farm? (Grocery stores and farmers markets)
  - Have the children name some of the ways that spinach can be eaten (On a sandwich, in spinach dip, in eggs, on a pizza, or as salad with a little bit of dressing).
- Conclude the activity by telling the children they are going to taste spinach salad.
- Serve the spinach salad.



**ACTIVITY LENGTH**  
15 minutes

### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- If the spinach is not pre-rinsed, thoroughly rinse spinach leaves with a salad spinner or colander and dry leaves between sheets of paper towel.
- Prepare spinach salad by lightly tossing raw spinach leaves with dressing. Make enough so that each child can be offered a small portion: See crediting information on the next page if serving as part of a meal or snack.
- Review allergen information (Appendix E: Food Allergies, page 326) and check with families about food allergies.

### OFFER BITES, NOT BUSHELS

A child can be overwhelmed by a large portion and may even refuse to try a food, fearing it must be finished. Offer small tastes and be willing to offer more if a child desires to taste again. A child should be encouraged, but not pressured, to taste the new food. Caregivers are strongly encouraged to be a role model and enjoy the spinach with the children.



## PREPARATION TIME

5 minutes

## MAKES

1 serving

## CACFP CREDITING INFORMATION

One serving (¼ cup of spinach) provides ⅛ cup of vegetables. For more information on the CACFP meal patterns, see Appendix G, page 330.

## NUTRIENTS PER SERVING

Calories .....	11
Protein .....	0 g
Carbohydrates .....	1 g
Total Fat .....	1 g
Saturated Fat .....	0 g
Cholesterol .....	0 mg
Iron .....	0 mg
Calcium .....	7 mg
Sodium .....	56 mg
Dietary Fiber .....	0 g

## RECIPE

# Spinach Salad



## INGREDIENTS

For each child:

- ¼ cup of spinach, fresh
- 1 teaspoon light Italian dressing
- Fork, plate, and napkin

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Seat each child at a table with supplies.
2. Measure out ¼ cup of fresh spinach leaves for each child and serve.
3. Add 1 teaspoon of light Italian dressing.

## COOKING WITH CHILDREN

Young children can:

- Help rinse the spinach leaves under cool running water.
- Help toss the salad.



# Spinach: How Do You Grow?

## ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

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### GROWING ACTIVITY

Plant Spinach Outdoors

Pages 104-105

15 minutes

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### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Make a Seed Tape

Page 106

15-20 minutes

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### CRAFT ACTIVITY

Stamped Wrapping Paper

Page 107

10 minutes

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### READING ACTIVITY

Page 108

10-20 minutes

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## ACTIVITY LENGTH

15 minutes

## GROWING ACTIVITY

# Plant Spinach Outdoors

### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- If using a seed tape, prepare it ahead of time. Involve the children as an extra activity (see page 106).
- Prepare garden or flowerbed for planting by tilling (breaking up) and fertilizing the soil (Appendix B: Green Thumb Guide, page 318).



**The children plant spinach outdoors and learn what spinach needs to grow.**

### OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Describe the resources needed to grow spinach; and
- Experience planting spinach seeds or a spinach plant.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Spinach seeds, seed tape, seedlings, or starter plants (see Planting Options, next page)
- Garden or flowerbed
- Hoe, trowel, or large spoon (wash after)
- Garden hose with sprinkler nozzle or watering can

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Take the children and the spinach seeds or seed tape outside. Explain that today they will plant spinach seeds and learn what seeds need to grow into plants.
- Point to the sun. Ask the children how the sunlight feels on their skin (warm).
- Explain that the light and warmth of the sun help spinach seeds grow into plants that will produce more spinach.



- Show the children the soil in a garden or flowerbed. Let them touch the soil. Ask them how the soil feels (wet or dry, hard or soft) and smells. Explain that spinach seeds need soil to grow into plants.
- Run some water from a hose or pour some from a watering can and let the children touch it. Ask how it feels (wet). Explain that water helps plants grow.
- Explain that water for plants usually comes as rain. Plants, like spinach, need lots of water so farmers and gardeners use sprinklers, hoses, or watering cans in addition to rain to make sure the plants have plenty of water.
- Have the children help lay the seeds or prepared seed tapes in the soil at the preferred planting depth of ½ inch, cover with soil and water. Remind the children of how far apart spinach seeds are planted (at least 6 inches apart).
- Let children know spinach grows best when you tend to it daily. It needs water to grow.



## PLANTING OPTIONS

- **SEEDS:** Follow the directions on the back of the spinach seed packet to plant seeds directly into the ground.
- **SEED TAPE:** A seed tape (see page 106) ensures your seeds will be spaced appropriately and can make it easier for small hands to help plant small seeds.
- **SEEDLINGS:** If you have grown spinach seedlings indoors and hardened off the plants for outdoor planting, you can substitute the plants for the seeds. (See Appendix B, page 318 for information on hardening seedlings.)
- **STARTER PLANTS:** You can also purchase spinach starter plants at a greenhouse or nursery and plant directly into the ground. Refer to starter plants instead of seeds during the activity.

## Green Thumb Guide

### IS SPACE LIMITED?

Spinach grows well in a container at least 8- to 10-inches in diameter (see Appendix B: Green Thumb Guide, page 318).





## ACTIVITY LENGTH

15 20 minutes

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

# Make a Seed Tape



**A seed tape makes planting easier when working with small seeds and makes sure seeds are spaced appropriately.**

### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- To make the seed tape, prepare the gel ahead of time by dissolving 1 tablespoon of cornstarch in 1 cup of cold water. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly. Once the mixture starts to boil and turns into a gel, remove from heat and allow it to cool to room temperature.

### GIFT GIVING IDEA



Portion a bag of potting soil and put it in a pot. Lay the seed circle on top of the bag of soil and wrap in Stamped Wrapping Paper (page 107). Copy the back of the seed package for growing instructions, if desired.

### VARIATION

#### MAKE A SEED CIRCLE TO PLANT IN A POT

Cut a circle of paper towel the diameter of a 15-ounce can of food. Glue one or two seeds to the center of the paper towel circle using the cornstarch gel.

### OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Experience making a seed tape.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Cornstarch
- Stovetop or hot plate
- Spinach seed packet
- Sealable plastic sandwich bag or small paintbrush
- Paper towels, inexpensive type that will breakdown in soil easily
- Ruler
- Pen
- Blunt-tip scissors

### INSTRUCTIONS

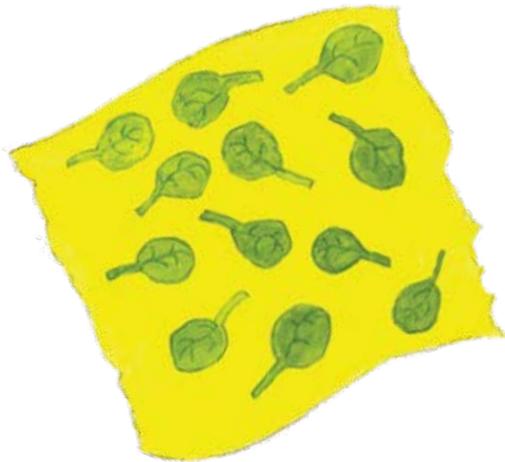
- Take three or four paper towels, fold them in half, and cut them into 1-inch strips, cutting across the perforations to create long strips. Unfold and lay the paper towel strips on a flat surface.
- Refer to the seed packet to note how far apart the seeds should be spaced. Use a ruler and pen to make marks on the towel strips at the appropriate spacing.
- Place a few spoonfuls of the gel into a plastic sandwich bag and seal the top. Snip off a corner of the gel-filled bag and squeeze a small droplet of gel on each of the marked spots. Place a seed on top of each drop of gel. The seeds will be firmly attached when the gel dries. Note: Gel can also be applied with a small paintbrush.

Young children can help mark where to place the seeds on the paper strip and place spinach seeds on gel dots.



## CRAFT ACTIVITY

# Stamped Wrapping Paper



The children make stamped wrapping paper with vegetable designs.

### OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Assert individuality (designing wrapping paper that differs in color and design from other children); and
- Develop and strengthen their fine motor skills.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Large fresh spinach leaves to coat with paint
- Acrylic craft paint (various colors)
- Paper plates for paint
- Large sheets of light-colored paper, at least one per child
- Smocks or bibs (*optional*)
- Table coverings (*optional*)

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Seat each child at a table with supplies.
- Give each child a piece of paper.
- Show the children how to coat a leaf with paint. Press coated leaves to paper; repeat until desired pattern is created.
- Repeat stamping with different colors if desired. Use a new spinach leaf for each new color.
- Set the papers on a flat surface to dry.
- Have the children wash their hands.



### ACTIVITY LENGTH

10 minutes

### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Organize the materials.

### MIXED-AGES TIP

*Grow It! Buddies* can help younger children make stamps. *Grow It! Buddies* can create a pattern of colors and shapes.





## ACTIVITY LENGTH

10-20 minutes  
depending on the  
length of the book

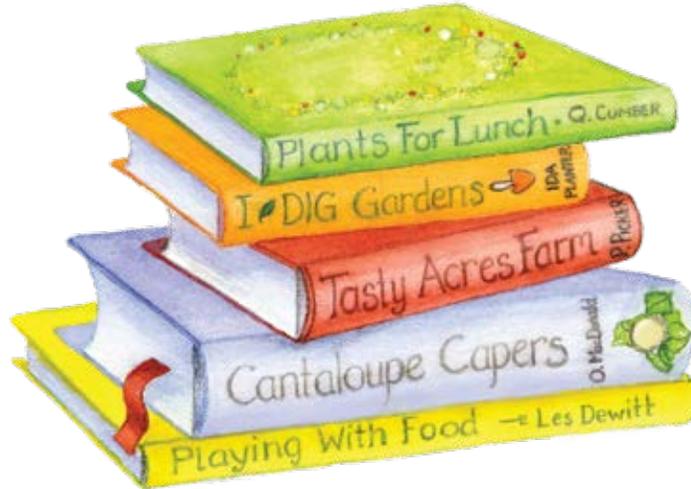
## WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Clear a space for the children to sit around you.
- Choose a book from the Harvest of Books list (Basics, page 15).
- Borrow the book you select from a library or purchase it.
- You can also use other books related to fruits and vegetables that may already be available to you.

## MIXED-AGES TIP

- Hold the baby on your lap while reading to other children.
- Give the baby a fruit or vegetable board book.
- Have *Grow It! Buddies* read to younger children.

# Reading Activity



**Read story books to the children that are about growing and/or eating fruits and vegetables. Listening to such stories can encourage children to adopt positive behaviors that can last a lifetime, like trying new fruits and vegetables.**

## OBJECTIVE

Children will be able to:

- Describe the fun and interesting stories about fruits and vegetables that were read to them.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Books from a library or purchased books
- Space for the children to sit

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Have the children sit around you as you read the book.
- Ask the children to listen for the names of vegetables and fruits as the story is read. If possible, have the children act out parts of the book to encourage movement during story time.
- Ask the children which fruits and vegetables were named in the story and what happened to them. For example,
  - Where were the fruits and vegetables grown?
  - What happened to the fruits and vegetables after they were picked?
  - Who ate the fruits and vegetables?
- Add other questions that relate to the story.



## ACTIVITY OVERVIEW



### FOOD GROUP ACTIVITY

Leafy Green Vegetables

Pages 110-113

20-25 minutes



### MOVEMENT ACTIVITY

Active Spinach Stretch

Pages 114-115

10 minutes



### TASTING ACTIVITY

Spinach Egg Bake

Pages 116-117

15-20 minutes





## ACTIVITY LENGTH

20 minutes;  
25 minutes if optional  
coloring activity  
conducted

## FOOD GROUP ACTIVITY

# Green Leafy Vegetables



## WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Review the foods and activities shown on the *MyPlate Poster*.
- Display the *MyPlate Poster*.
- Wash and dry several leaves each of spinach, romaine, and green leaf lettuce; reserve a large leaf of each for display.
- Tear romaine and green leaf lettuce leaves in pieces the size of a spinach leaf, one each per child.
- *Optional:* Make copies of the *MyPlate* coloring sheet (Appendix I, page 333), one per child.
- Review allergen information (Appendix E: Food Allergies, page 326) and check with families about food allergies.

**Introduce the children to the *Grow It, Try It, Like It! MyPlate Poster*. The children will learn that spinach and other leafy greens are part of the Vegetable Group. They will taste the difference between romaine, green leaf lettuce, and spinach leaves.**

## OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Say that spinach is part of the Vegetable Group;
- Say that eating vegetables like spinach helps keep us healthy;
- Compare spinach to other leafy green vegetables;
- Say that being physically active every day helps us feel good;
- Say that eating foods from the different food groups each day helps us grow and be healthy; and
- Name a food from each of the five food groups.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- *Grow It, Try It, Like It! MyPlate Poster*
- Spinach, romaine, and green leaf lettuce leaves
- Plates and napkins
- *Optional:* Make copies of the *MyPlate* coloring sheet (Appendix I, page 333), one per child.

## BEFORE THE ACTIVITY—HAND WASHING AND POLITE TASTING

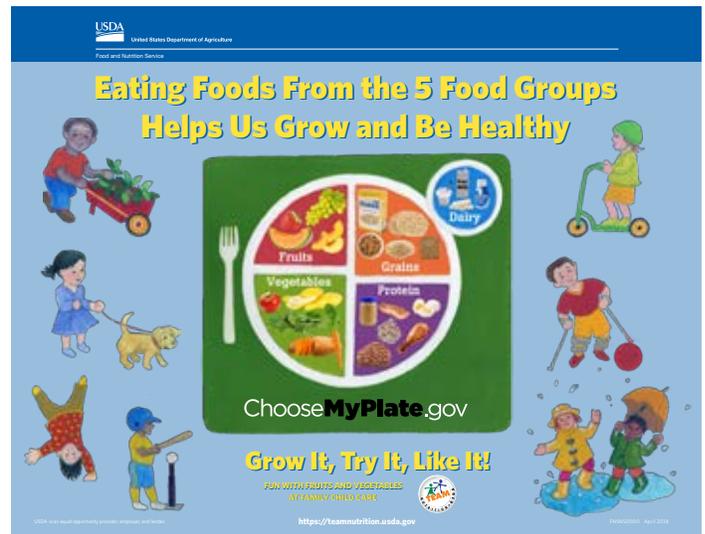
- Explain that we should always wash our hands before preparing and eating food. Have the children wash their hands (Appendix D: Hand Washing, page 325).
- Remind the children about polite food-tasting habits (Appendix C: Polite Food Tasting—Be Kind, page 324).



## INSTRUCTIONS

### Learning the Food Groups

- Seat the children in a semicircle on the floor in view of the *Grow It, Try It, Like It! MyPlate Poster*.
- Tell the children that today they are going to learn about ways to be healthy and have fun every day. Tell the children that the best part is they already like to do what helps them be healthy: they like to eat a variety of foods and they like to play.
- Show the *Grow It, Try It, Like It! MyPlate Poster* to the children. Ask the children to tell you what they see on the poster. Accept all correct answers, such as food, specific foods by name, children playing, specific activities by name, etc.
- Explain that MyPlate shows the five food groups a person should eat from each day. Each food group has its own color. Point to the different sections as you discuss. The Fruit Group is red, the Vegetable Group is green, the Grains Group is orange, the Dairy Group is blue, and the Protein Foods Group is purple. Eating foods from each food group helps us to grow and be healthy. Explain that spinach is part of the vegetable group.



*The Grow It, Try It, Like It! MyPlate Poster shows foods from the five food groups.*



### GRAINS

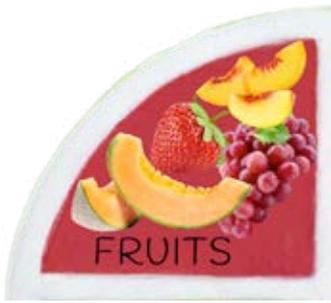
- Tell the children that foods made from grains are in the Grains Group represented by the orange-colored section on MyPlate. Point to the food group on the poster and state that grain foods like bread, cereal, rice, and pasta give us energy to play.
- Ask two children to come to the poster, point to a food in the orange section, and name the food. After each child names a food, repeat the name of the food and state that (the food named) and other foods from the Grains Group also give us energy to play.
- Children this age may not know what a grain is. Tell them grains come from plants such as wheat, oats, rice, and corn. Grains are used to make foods like cereal, bread, tortillas, and pasta.



### VEGETABLES

- Tell the children that many foods from plants are in the Vegetable Group and are represented by the green section of MyPlate. Point out the spinach on the poster. Ask the children to name this vegetable (spinach). Ask the children to name the color of spinach (green). Explain that eating green vegetables, like spinach, can help them to be healthy.
- Ask two children to come to the poster, point to a vegetable in the green section, and name the vegetable. After each child names a vegetable, repeat the name of the vegetable and state that (the vegetable named) and other foods from the Vegetable Group also help keep us healthy.





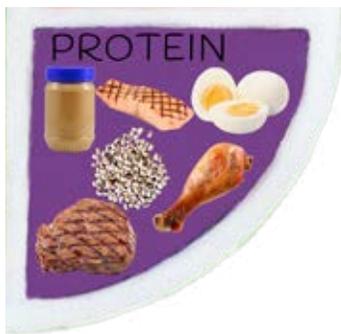
## FRUITS

- Tell the children that some foods from plants are in the Fruit Group represented by the red section. Point to the strawberry shown on the poster and state that strawberries help keep us healthy.
- Ask two children to come to the poster, point to a fruit in the red section, and name the fruit. After each child names a fruit, repeat the name of the fruit and state that (the fruit named) and other foods from the Fruit Group help keep us healthy.



## DAIRY

- Tell the children that milk and foods made from milk are in the Dairy Group represented by the blue section. Point to the milk and yogurt on the poster and state that milk and yogurt help us build strong bones.
- Ask two children to come to the poster, point out a food in the blue section, and name the food. After each child names a food, repeat the name of the food and state that (the food named) and other foods from the Dairy Group also help us build strong bones.

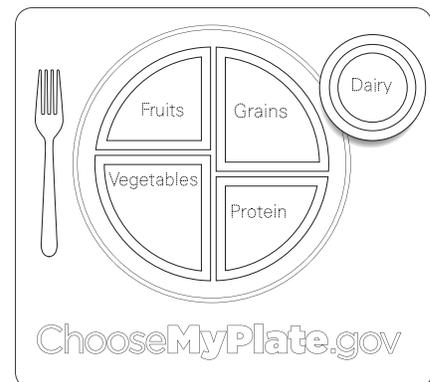


## PROTEIN FOODS

- Tell the children that foods from animals and some plants are in the Protein Foods Group represented by the purple section. Point to the meat, fish, egg, beans, and peanut butter on the poster and state that these foods help our muscles grow.
- Ask two children to come to the poster, point out a food in the purple section, and name the food. After each child names a food, repeat the name of the food and state that (the food named) and other foods from the Protein Foods Group also help our muscles grow. (Note: if only foods that come from animals are selected, point out a food from plants and name it. If only foods from plants are selected, point out a food that comes from animals and name it).

## OPTIONAL COLORING ACTIVITY

- Seat each child at a table with supplies.
- Distribute a copy of the MyPlate coloring sheet (Appendix I, page 333) to each child.
- Ask the children to color the Vegetable Group section of MyPlate green and draw and color a spinach leaf near it. Help the younger children who may not know their colors yet.
- With older children, have them copy the dot-to-dot outline of the word "Vegetables."



## TIME TO TASTE!

- Show the children the romaine and green leaf lettuce. Tell the children that these are leafy green vegetables similar to spinach.
- Give the children samples of each leafy green to feel, smell, taste, and compare to spinach.
- After tasting the samples of the three varieties of leafy greens, invite the children to feel and smell the larger leaves of romaine and green leaf lettuce. Discard the leaves at the end of the lesson.
- Ask the children to name different ways to eat vegetables like spinach at different meals and snacks. Accept all answers such as on sandwiches, in vegetable salads, in eggs, etc.



## OFFER BITES, NOT BUSHELS

A child can be overwhelmed by a large portion and may even refuse to try a food, fearing it must be finished. Offer small tastes and be willing to offer more if a child desires to taste again. A child should be encouraged, but not pressured, to taste the new food. Caregivers are strongly encouraged to be a role model and enjoy the spinach with the children.





**ACTIVITY LENGTH**  
10 minutes

## MOVEMENT ACTIVITY

# Active Spinach Stretch



### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Display the *Grow It, Try It, Like It!* MyPlate Poster.

Spinach Stretch is a fun activity to get children moving.

### OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Move and stretch during a group activity;
- Follow instructions from an adult; and
- Say that being physically active helps us feel good.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Space to do activity
- *Grow It, Try It, Like It!* MyPlate Poster



*Grow It, Try It, Like It!* MyPlate Poster



## INSTRUCTIONS

- Point to the various activities depicted on the *Grow It, Try It, Like It! MyPlate Poster*. Ask the children to tell you why it is important to be physically active and play every day (it helps you be strong and healthy, and it is fun). Tell the children that today they will learn to be active in a way that reminds them of the leafy greens they just tasted.
- Ask the children to extend their arms out to the side and spread apart from each other so that no one is able to easily touch another child's fingers. When children are spaced around the room, ask them to lower their arms and listen carefully. Tell the children that stretching is an important way to be active. Ask the children to watch you show them a special stretch that celebrates spinach.
- Squat to the ground and wrap your arms around your knees, with the heels slightly raised, creating a ball shape with your body. Tell the children the stretch starts the way a spinach plant starts, with a little round seed. Slowly drop the heels and straighten the legs and extend the arms to touch the toes or reach as far toward the toes as is comfortable, ending in a forward bend from the waist with the arms and head down. Tell the children the spinach plant starts to grow and stretch out. Next, gradually roll the spine up to a standing position and raise the arms above the head. Now fan the arms out to the side, pretending the arms are the edges of the spinach leaf. Sway gently from side to side in the slight breeze that blows through Spinach Lane.
- Ask the children to do the Active Spinach Stretch with you several times. During each stretch, remind the children of the stages of how spinach grows.
- Conclude the activity by telling the children it is fun to eat spinach and other leafy greens and be physically active by doing an Active Spinach Stretch.

## NOTE TO CAREGIVER

Active play and movement are important for every child's growth and development. Although they may seem to be active and energetic, most children do not get the amount of physical activity they need for good health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children get 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of physical activity daily.

## MIXED-AGES TIP

*Grow It! Buddies* can help lead the stretching.





## ACTIVITY LENGTH

15 20 minutes

### WHAT TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Organize recipe ingredients.
- Prepare entire recipe. OR
- Set the ingredients on a table so children can help make the recipe (see *Cooking With Children*, page 117).
- Review allergen information (Appendix E: Food Allergies, page 326) and check with families about food allergies.

### OFFER BITES, NOT BUSHELS

A child can be overwhelmed by a large portion and may even refuse to try a food, fearing it must be finished. Offer small tastes and be willing to offer more if a child desires to taste again. A child should be encouraged, but not pressured, to taste the new food. Caregivers are strongly encouraged to be a role model and enjoy the salad with the children.

### WORDS TO GROW

Spinach

Eggs

## TASTING ACTIVITY

# Spinach Egg Bake

The children taste a new spinach recipe and talk about different ways to eat spinach.

### OBJECTIVES

The children will be able to:

- Taste spinach in a combination food, Spinach Egg Bake, for lunch or snack.
- Describe many different ways to eat spinach; and
- Help prepare a dish with spinach (*optional*).

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Spinach Egg Bake ingredients (recipe, page 117)
- Plates, forks, and napkins

### BEFORE THE ACTIVITY—HAND WASHING AND POLITE TASTING

- Explain that we should always wash our hands before preparing and eating food. Have the children wash their hands (Appendix D: Hand Washing, page 325).
- Remind the children about polite food-tasting habits (Appendix C: Polite Food Tasting—Be Kind, page 324).



### INSTRUCTIONS

- Seat each child at a table with supplies.
- Ask the children to share what they remember learning about spinach.
- Encourage answers such as how and where spinach grows; how it looks, feels, smells, and tastes; and other information covered in the unit.
- Show the children the Spinach Egg Bake and talk about the other foods in the salad. If making the recipe as part of the activity, make it at this point.
- Serve the children Spinach Egg Bake at any meal.
- As the children are eating, ask:
  - What spinach recipes have you made with your family?
  - What different ways have you eaten spinach?
  - What new ways do you think spinach could be eaten?



## RECIPE

# Spinach Egg Bake

*This is a USDA standardized recipe.*

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 ¼ cups spinach, frozen, chopped, thawed, and drained (2 ¼ cups thawed and drained yields 1 ½ cups)
- 6 eggs, large (1 ¼ cup of whole liquid eggs can be substituted for fresh eggs)
- 1 tablespoon feta cheese, crumbled
- 1 teaspoon onions, dehydrated, chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper, ground
- Nonstick cooking spray
- Forks, plates, and napkins (one per child)



### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
2. Thaw spinach in the microwave using package direction or by placing under cool running water.
3. Drain excess water from spinach.
4. Whisk eggs in a small mixing bowl. Add feta cheese, dehydrated onions, salt, and black pepper. Mix well.
5. Lightly coat medium baking dish (about 8" x 8") with nonstick cooking spray.
6. Spread spinach evenly on the bottom of the baking dish.
7. Top spinach with egg mixture. Keep the vegetables spread evenly by slightly stirring the mixture with a spatula or spoon. Place baking dish in the oven. Bake for 15 minutes at 350 °F to an internal temperature of 165 °F or higher for at least 15 seconds.
8. Then, broil on high for 2 minutes or until the eggs are set and the top is a light to golden brown color. Remove immediately to prevent burning. Caution: use a hot pad as dish will be very hot.
9. Cut into 6 even pieces. Serve immediately. Serve 1 piece per child.

### COOKING WITH CHILDREN

Young children can:

- Help mix ingredients in the bowl.
- Help crack the eggs.
- Help spread the spinach in the baking dish.

### PREPARATION TIME

20 minutes

### COOK TIME

17 minutes

### MAKES

6 servings

### CACFP CREDITING INFORMATION

One serving provides 2 oz equivalent meat alternate and ¼ cup vegetable. For more information on the CACFP meal patterns, see Appendix G, page 330.

### NUTRIENTS PER SERVING

Calories	115
Protein	8 g
Carbohydrate	4 g
Total Fat	8 g
Saturated Fat	2 g
Cholesterol	0 mg
Iron	0 mg
Calcium	14 mg
Sodium	203 mg
Dietary Fiber	0 g



# Fun Extras



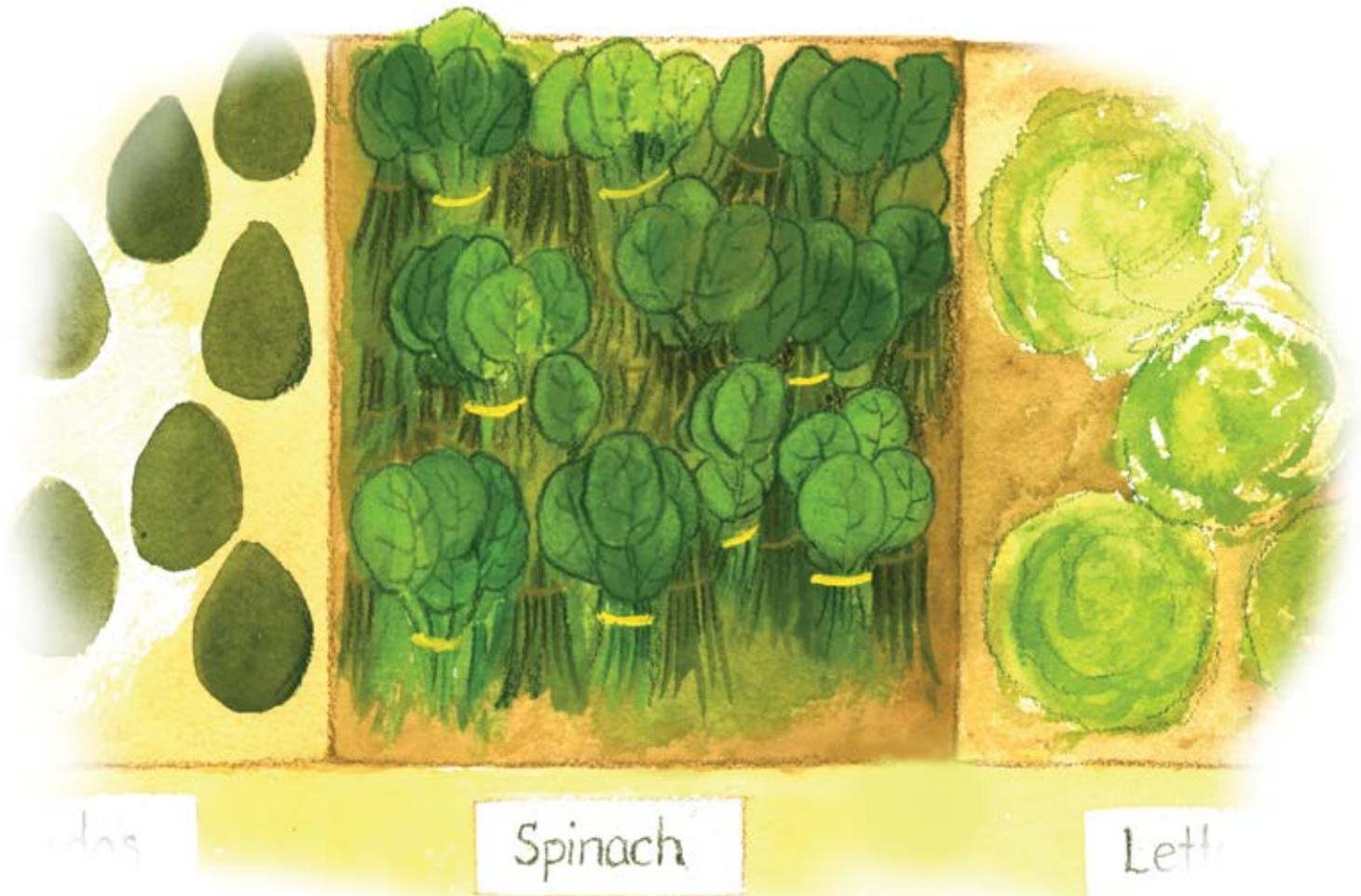
# Spinach

Growing in a Garden



# Spinach

In a Grocery Store



# Spinach

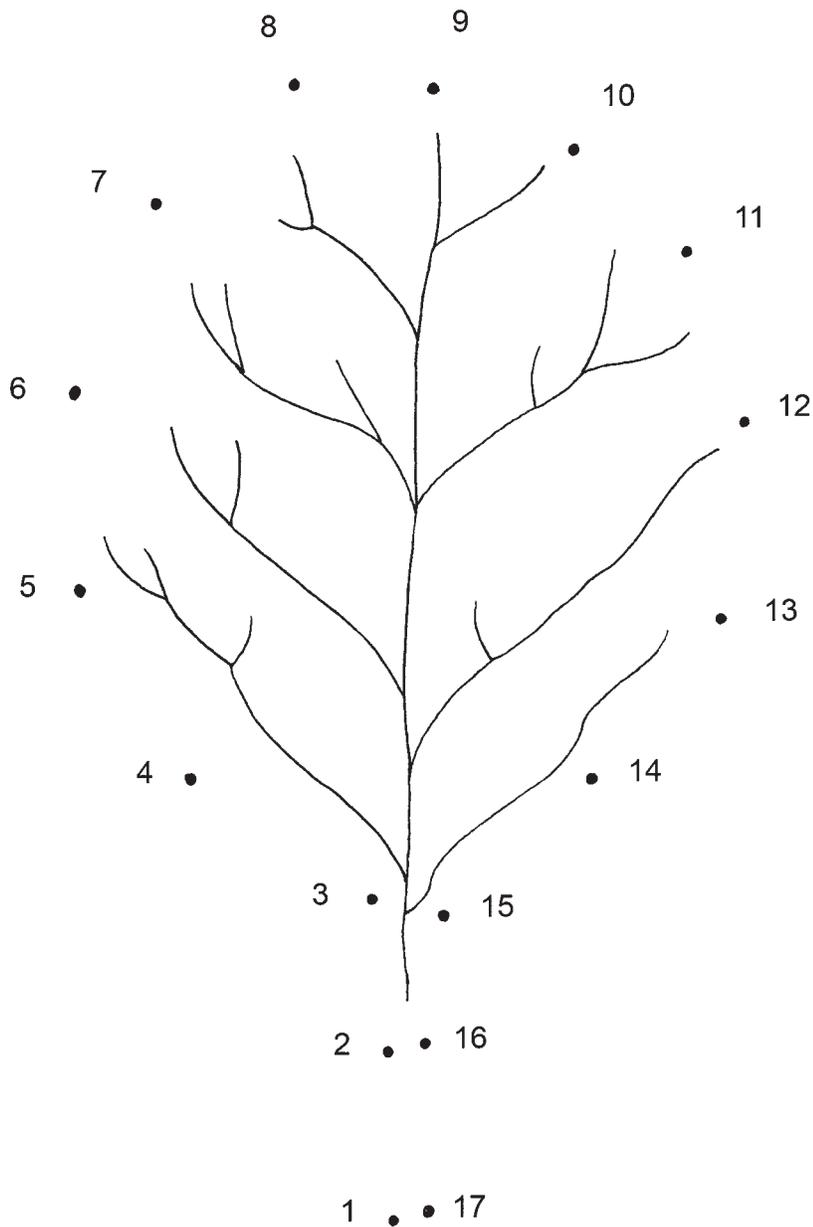
Blackline Master



# Spinach Dot-to-Dot

**Dear Family:**

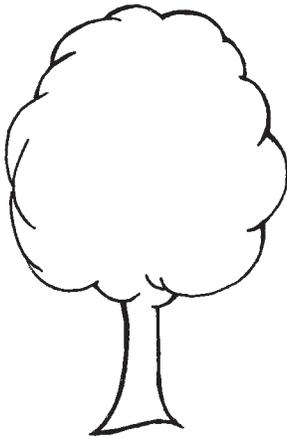
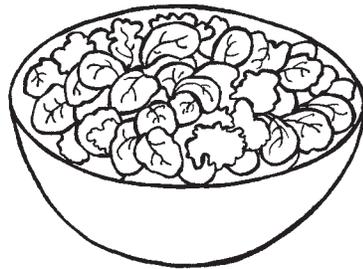
Your child has been learning about spinach, how it looks and feels. Help your child complete this dot-to-dot activity. The completed dot-to-dot reveals a spinach leaf. Talk with your child about different ways to eat spinach while he or she colors the spinach leaf.



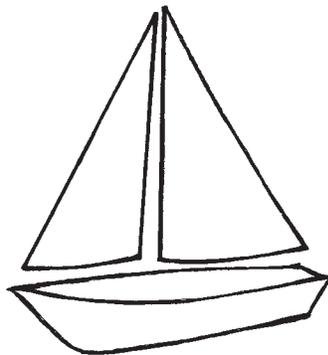
# Where Does Spinach Grow?

**Dear Family:**

Help your child recall all we've learned about growing spinach. Have your child draw a line from the bowl of spinach to the picture showing where spinach grows. Talk with your child about how spinach gets to our homes—we buy it at the store or farmers market.



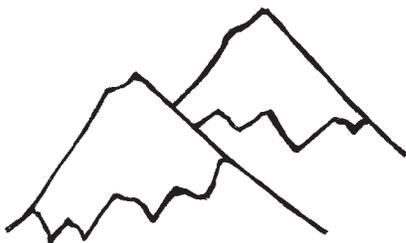
**On a tree**



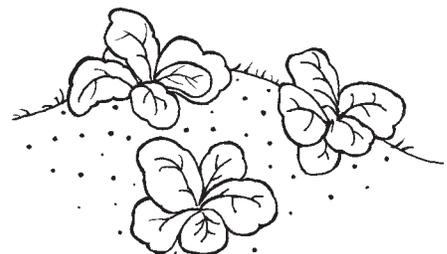
**On a boat**



**In a building**



**On a snow-covered mountain**



**In a field**



# Spinach Puzzle Pieces

## Dear Family:

Have your child color this drawing of spinach growing in the field. Glue the colored page to a piece of cardboard (a cereal box works great). Cut out the puzzle pieces along the lines. Have your child put the puzzle pieces together.

Keep the puzzle and encourage your child to put it together often. Each time the puzzle is used, talk about spinach. Ask your child how spinach grows. Talk about ways to eat it.

