

The Pick Of The Crop

A watermelon grows much like many other plants. Its roots grow underground and its vine acts as a stem. The sweet flesh of the watermelon is protected by a thick rind. So how does one determine if a watermelon is ripe? Ask students to brainstorm a variety of methods; then record their responses on chart paper. Next have students ask their parents how *they* determine a watermelon's ripeness. To record his parent's response, provide each student with a copy of the reply form on page 9. The next day invite students to share their findings with the class. If desired, have students try their parents' suggestions on the watermelon from "The Wonder Box" (on page 3). Most experts agree that a watermelon is ripe when it has a yellow underside and it gives a hollow or muffled sound when thumped. But don't be surprised if you find a few other ways to tell when this juicy vegetable is ripe!

Fruit or Vegetable	Outside				Inside		
	Color	Shape	Texture	Firmness	Color	Seeds	Smell
Watermelon	green	oblong	smooth	hard	pink	yes	sweet
Cantaloupe							
Honeydew							
Cucumber							
Squash							
Pumpkin							

A Fruity Vegetable

Because watermelons grow on vines and must be replanted annually, they are considered to be vegetables. Watermelons belong to the gourd family that includes cucumbers, squash, and pumpkins. Put your students' observation skills to the test with this comparison activity. Post a chart like the one shown, and display a watermelon and an assortment of other produce. Under your students' direction, list the displayed produce. To complete the chart, record your students' observations about each listed fruit and vegetable, cutting open the produce as needed. Then use the chart to discuss the similarities and differences between the fruits and vegetables. Culminate the activity by cutting the fruits and vegetables into bite-size pieces for student sampling.

Similar Slices

Forming cooperative groups is a cinch with these colorful watermelon cutouts. Make a class set of red-and-green watermelon cutouts. Choose a standard number of cooperative groups and determine the number of students per group. Then label a set of cutouts for each group. Each set of cutouts must have a different construction-paper seed pattern. Laminiate the cutouts for durability. When it's time to group the students, simply distribute the cutouts and have students who are holding matching cutouts work together. Collect the cutouts so that you can use them again and again. Students will be all smiles at the thought of working with different classmates each time cooperative groups are formed.

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How Does Your Watermelon Grow?

Watermelons grow best in hot climates and prefer sandy, irrigated soil. Florida, Georgia, California, Texas, Arizona, Indiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Missouri, and Oklahoma lead the United States in watermelon harvest. For a fun cooperative-group activity, have students work together to create unique posters that advertise the watermelons from these states. Assign each of ten student groups a different state. Instruct each group to design a colorful poster that advertises the watermelons grown in its assigned state. Remind each group that its poster should persuade consumers to purchase its state's watermelons over those grown in other states. Provide the groups with white poster board or tagboard, construction paper, markers, and other poster-making supplies. Set aside time for each group to present its completed poster to the class; then display the mouthwatering projects in the school hallway or cafeteria for others to view.

Eat
North
Carolina



- sweetest
- juiciest
- farm-grown
- seedless
- hand-picked
- low-fat