A52 Studying crop differences

Crops vary enormously between each other, such as aubergine and cucumber, as well as between varieties within each crop, such as yellow and red tomatoes. There are also similarities, such as flowers and growth habits. The following activity investigates this tremendous diversity based on plants growing in school gardens and can be adapted to suit different age groups.

Resources

- Range of crops
- Pen and paper

Activity

1. Select a minimum of two crops or two varieties.
2. Find out about leaves, flowers, roots, colour, size, season of growth, history, country of origin, history in your own garden, use in the kitchen, etc.
3. Use your senses to describe each one, ie sight, smell, sound, touch, and of course, taste.
4. Write or draw the differences and similarities.

Top tip

Curriculum links

Link this work to wider learning.

- How do varieties support Darwin's theory of evolution?
- Historic links to heritage varieties (see G3.4 for examples).
- How do crops grown today differ from 100 years ago?
- How do growing methods of today differ from 100 years ago?

Extended activities

1. Investigate the arguments for and against 'genetically modified' (GM) crops.
2. Investigate whether organic seed is worth buying, and the availability of supplies.
3. Investigate a particular vegetable family, such as the 'brassica' family, which includes Brussels sprout, cabbage, cauliflower and many others. **Tip**: see crop rotation guidance in S3.2 and 'Edible plant parts' poster.
4. Take part in Garden Organic's Members' Experiments. Every year, schools can compare varieties and gardening techniques. See www.gardenorganic.org.uk

Health & Safety	Only eat varieties and parts of the plant you're sure are safe to eat, ensuring adult supervision. *See also Health and Safety Guidelines (Section SG1.2)*
Further information	S3.2 Planning crop rotation G3.4 Comparing varieties Organic Gardening Catalogue www.organiccatalogue.com Heritage Seed Library www.gardenorganic.org.uk/hsl The Museum of Garden History www.museumgardenhistory.org