Harvest of the Month



MELONS

Farm to ECE
EARLY CARE & EDUCATION
NEBRASKA

Download and print items from
the Harvest of the Month toolkit at:
www.education.ne.gov/ns/farm-to-school/harvest-of-the-month

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

4 ACTIVITY CALENDARS

6 ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

7 MELON FUN FACTS

8 QUICK BITES

9 HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

26 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NEBRASKA AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM
NEBRASKA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

FLEXIBILITY – FOR YOU!

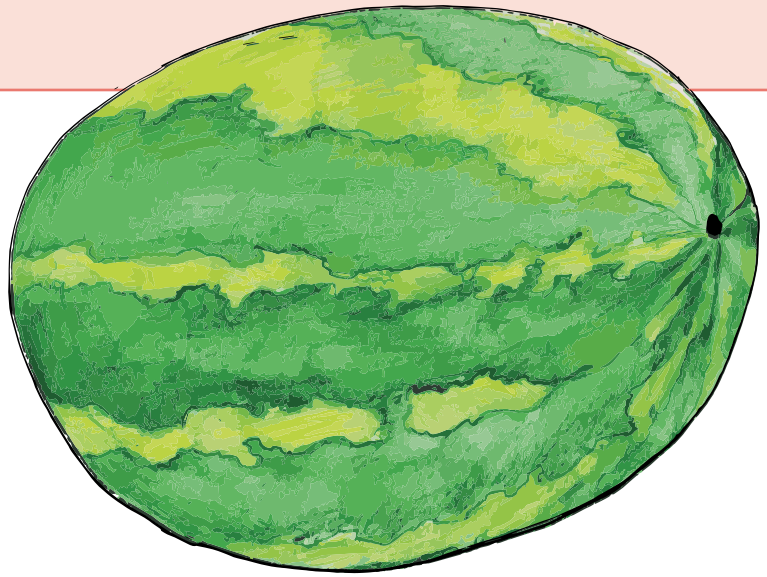
Use the provided activity calendars as a guide to incorporate this resource into your classroom. Follow the calendars as written, or use them as inspiration and select the activities that work best for you, the children, and your schedule.

TRY READING THE SAME BOOK EVERY DAY FOR A WEEK.

Reading the same book every day for a week allows children to learn more about the story and dive deeper into the book's meaning. Rereading a story leads to greater reading confidence. Ask discussion questions to encourage children to retell the story. This practice will help prepare children for more complex narratives down the road.

DON'T HESITATE TO REPEAT ACTIVITIES.

Repetition provides the practice that children need to learn and master new skills. As children repeat activities, they will improve speed, increase confidence, and strengthen the connections in their brain that help them learn!

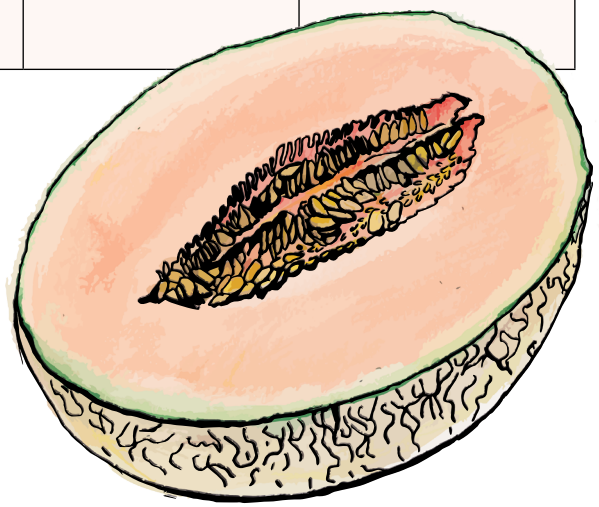


ACTIVITY CALENDAR: PLANNING FOR ONE MONTH

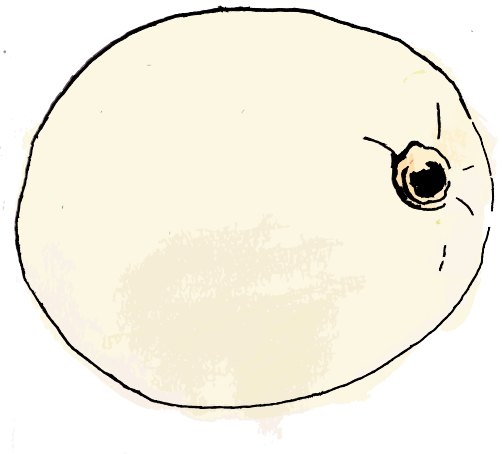
WEEKLY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Student Understanding: Farmers grow watermelons. **Book of the Week:** *The Fruits We Eat* by Gail Gibbons	Farm Story with Props Video: *Watermelon Dance*	Story Time with Book of the Week Sorting Activity	Story Time with Book of the Week Video: *Seed to Melon Timelapse*	Quick Bite One Video: *Watermelon Dance*	Story Time with Book of the Week Recipe: *Watermelon Salsa*
Student Understanding: Watermelons start as a seed. **Book of the Week:** *Grandpa's Garden* by Stella Fry	Story Time with Book of the Week Quick Bite Activity for Exploration	Song: *Watermelon, Watermelon, Yummy* Fine Motor Activity	Story Time with Book of the Week Craft Activity	Sensory Activity Counting Activity	Story Time with Book of the Week Recipe: *Watermelon Cooler*
Student Understanding: There are many types of melons! **Book of the Week:** *Fruits on MyPlate* by Mari Schuh	Farm Story with Props Quick Bite Two	Story Time with Book of the Week Quick Bite Two	Story Time with Book of the Week Quick Bite Two	Story Time with Book of the Week Quick Bite Two	Recipe: *Cut Melon Wedges* Quick Bite Two
Student Understanding: There are many ways to eat melons! **Book of the Week:** *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits & Vegetables from A to Z* by Lois Ehlert	Story Time with Book of the Week Song: *Watermelon, Watermelon, Yummy*	Story Time with Book of the Week Recipe: *Berry Melon Summer Salad*	Story Time with Book of the Week Melon Coloring Page	Video: *Watermelon Dance* Song: *Down by the Bay Where the Watermelons Grow*	Farm Story with Props

ACTIVITY CALENDAR: PLANNING FOR TWO WEEKS

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
WEEK ONE	Farm Story with Props Quick Bite Activity for Exploration	Song: *Watermelon, Watermelon, Yummy* Fine Motor Activity	Story Time with Suggested Books for Reading Craft Activity	Sensory Activity Counting Activity Story Time with Suggested Books for Reading	Story Time with Suggested Books for Reading Recipe: *Watermelon Cooler*
WEEK TWO	Farm Story with Props Quick Bite Two	Story Time with Suggested Books for Reading Quick Bite Two	Story Time with Suggested Books for Reading Quick Bite Two	Story Time with Suggested Books for Reading Quick Bite Two	Recipe: *Cut Melon Wedges* Quick Bite Two



ENGAGEMENT TOOLS



SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR READING

- *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits & Vegetables from A to Z* by Lois Ehlert
- *Fruits on MyPlate* by Mari Schuh
- *The Fruits We Eat* by Gail Gibbons
- *Grandpa's Garden* by Stella Fry

SONGS, POEMS, AND VIDEOS

- All About Watermelon – Sprouting Interest for Kids Video
  - » youtube.com/watch?v=lAqKjjkrlp0
- Down by the Bay Where the Watermelons Grow Nursery Rhyme
  - » youtu.be/lAqTjRiCCQ0?si=0N7EElr2x3XsNA93
- Seed to Melon Timelapse Video
  - » youtube.com/watch?v=KNoPwKT8rVQ&t=22s
- Watermelon Dance
  - » youtube.com/watch?v=lANiUQ5thu8
- Watermelon, Watermelon, Yummy Song
  - » youtube.com/watch?v=P3djSI8pRss

INVOLVING FAMILIES

Involve families in the melons unit by sharing the Melons Fun Facts document. Add the information to a newsletter, incorporate the fun facts into a bulletin board, or send the sheet home so families can read through it and learn more together. Additional ways to involve families using the resources in this lesson could also include sharing the recipes and suggested books or inviting them to participate in one of the activities.

QUICK BITES

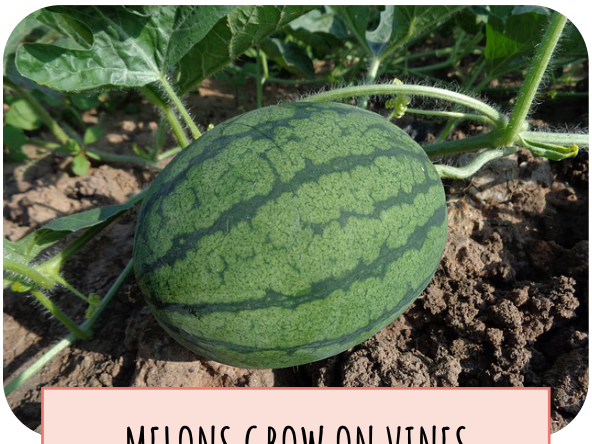
Harvest of the Month Quick Bites encourage children to participate in taste testing and provide activities for exploration. Children have the opportunity to learn more about the food on their plate and give feedback on food samples.

HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

These activities are aligned with the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines for children ages 4-5. Use the lessons to engage children in hands-on activities to practice fine and gross motor skills, explore crafts and music, engage the senses, and more! All activities are "center" or "play station" based for small groups of children to complete at a time. Reference the Activity Calendars for scheduling inspiration.

MELON FUN FACTS

Children are learning about melons! Extend learning outside of the classroom by creating a positive experience for children with a conversation about melons. Help them learn more about food and farming in Nebraska!



MELONS GROW ON VINES IN RAISED BEDS WHICH ARE PLANTED IN ROWS.



A YELLOWISH SPOT ON THE BOTTOM MEANS THAT IT IS RIPE AND READY TO BE PICKED.



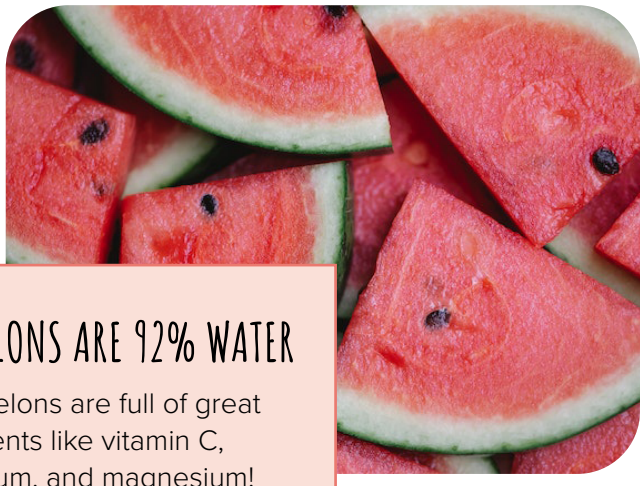
WATERMELONS CAN HAVE SEEDS IN THEM OR BE SEEDLESS.

They are in the same gourd family as squash and cucumbers.



THE ENTIRE MELON IS EDIBLE,

but traditionally only the sweet, red flesh is eaten.



WATERMELONS ARE 92% WATER

Watermelons are full of great nutrients like vitamin C, potassium, and magnesium!

QUICK BITES

Did you know? Children may need to try a new food 10-15 times before they determine whether or not they enjoy it. Taste tests are a great opportunity for children to try new, healthy foods in a low risk environment. Refer to the Taste Test Guide for food allergy information, precautions, and safety ideas before completing these activities with children.

QUICK BITE ONE

Try different varieties of watermelons!

- Example: Try a seedless watermelon and a watermelon with seeds to see if the children can spot any differences. Be sure to remove the seeds from the watermelon with seeds before serving it to the children. Have the children try both types of watermelon and encourage them to use descriptive language to describe what they are tasting. Ask prompting questions like: “What do you smell?” and “How does it taste?” Then have the children guess which watermelon they tasted and see if they can spot any differences.

QUICK BITE TWO

Try different varieties of melons.

- Example: Try varieties of melon that are grown in Nebraska like watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew, and muskmelon. At the end of the week, try each of the melons again in the form of a tasting party. Set out trays or plates of bite-sized melons for children to try. Have children place a sticker on the plate of their favorite melon. At the end of the tasting, count the stickers to see which melon is the group favorite.

ACTIVITY FOR EXPLORATION

Watermelon Exploration



1. Wash and rinse the outside of a whole watermelon.
2. Invite children to run their hands along the outside of it and hold it to feel its weight.
3. Talk about the color and patterns on the skins. Explain that watermelons can vary in size and they usually grow into a sphere or oval shape.
4. Invite each child to knock on the fruit. Does it sound solid or hollow?
5. As the children watch, cut open the watermelon to reveal the inside flesh.
6. Encourage children to smell the fruit. Point out the rind, flesh, and seeds.
7. Give each child a small piece to investigate. Ask, “How would you describe each part? Hard? Soft?” Explain that the green rind protects the soft fruit on the inside.
8. Your watermelon may or may not have seeds. If there are seeds, remind children they cannot eat the seeds. Ask, “What would a farmer do with the seeds?”
9. When the children are done exploring, have them wash their hands and serve them a fresh piece to eat.

HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

PAGE 10
SENSORY ACTIVITY - SEED PULLING
Children use their fine motor skills during this sensory exploration by squishing a watermelon with their hands and picking out the watermelon seeds with their fingers, small spoons, and plastic tweezers.

PAGE 11
FINE MOTOR - WATERMELON HAMMERING
Children explore characteristics of a watermelon from the outside by hammering golf tees into the top of a watermelon using a small wooden or rubber mallet.

PAGE 12
SORTING ACTIVITY - LIFE CYCLE OF A WATERMELON
Children predict the pattern of the life cycle of a watermelon by placing photos of the watermelon's life cycle in order from beginning to end.

PAGE 17
CRAFT ACTIVITY - WATERMELON PLATE
Children use creative expressions to create a watermelon using a paper plate. Children discover how watermelon is cut into triangles before we enjoy eating them.

PAGE 18
COUNTING ACTIVITY: COUNTING WATERMELON SEEDS
Children demonstrate recognition of numbers by pulling a card with a number and placing the corresponding amount of watermelon seeds on the watermelon mat.

PAGE 22
FARM STORY WITH PROPS
Read the story and have children follow along with the photos. Use the circle time activity props to enhance the experience!

SENSORY ACTIVITY

WATERMELON SEED PULLING



Standard (AL.01): Develops foundational skills that support initiative, self-direction, and curiosity as a learner.

Sensory play has multiple benefits for children such as sensory exploration, improving motor skills, increased socialization, promotion of life skills, language development, and calming techniques. With this simple activity, you will be promoting multiple growth opportunities for children.

THE GOAL

Children use their fine motor skills during this sensory exploration by squishing a watermelon with their hands and picking out the watermelon seeds with their fingers, small spoons, and plastic tweezers.

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity is best implemented as a small center with 1-2 children.

1. Scoop or cut out the center part of a medium watermelon. (Make sure it is NOT seedless.)
2. Place the watermelon into a sensory tub with spoons and plastic tweezers and a few small bowls.
3. Demonstrate how children can squish the watermelon and pull out the seeds and place them in the bowl.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Small/medium watermelon **with seeds**
- Plastic spoons and tweezers
- Two bowls
- Sensory bin

ENGAGE THE CHILDREN

Engage children to help develop language, socialization, fine motor, and touch sensory skills.

1. Ask children about what they are doing.
2. Ask children to provide explanations.
3. Ask children the following questions to help them make the connection from their lives to the farm.
    - » Why do farmers need to get the seeds from the watermelons? (so they can plant more seeds in the ground to turn into watermelons again the next year)
    - » What color are watermelon seeds? (black and white)
    - » Are watermelon seeds hard or soft? (hard)

FINE MOTOR ACTIVITY

WATERMELON HAMMERING



Standard (HP.01): Uses finger and hand control to operate and use small objects demonstrating fine motor coordination.

Fine motor skills are the building blocks that allow a child to self-care. Practicing fine motor skills helps children with the skills and techniques needed to do important independent activities such as tie their shoes, feeding themselves, and cleaning their own teeth.

THE GOAL

Children explore characteristics of a watermelon from the outside by hammering golf tees into the top of a watermelon using a small wooden or rubber mallet.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Medium watermelon
- Small wooden or rubber mallet
- 10-12 Plastic golf tees

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity is best implemented as a small center with 1-2 children.

1. Cut a medium watermelon in half and place it flat side down on a tabletop.
2. Place a 10-12 plastic golf tees and a small wooden or rubber mallet in front of each child participating.
3. Demonstrate how the children will hammer the golf tee into the top of the watermelon like the photo above.

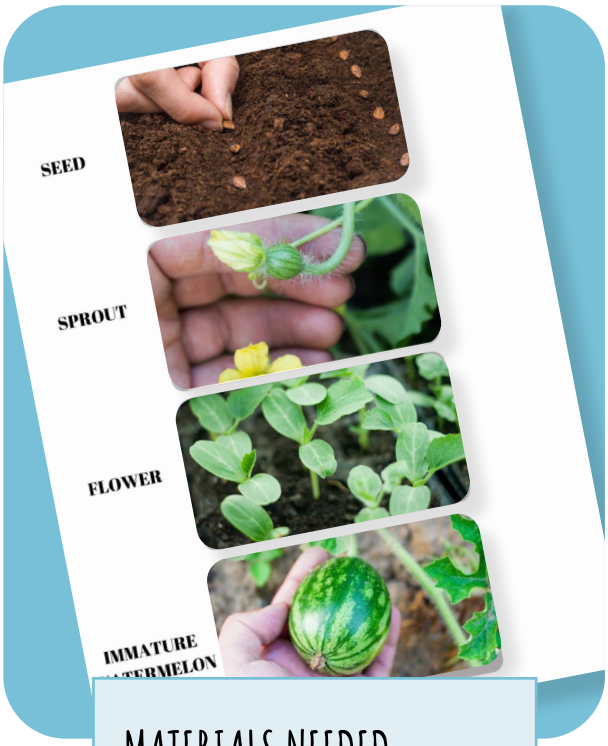
ENGAGE THE CHILDREN

Engage children to help develop language, socialization, fine motor, and touch sensory skills.

1. Ask children about what they are doing.
2. Ask children to provide explanations.
3. Ask children the following questions to help them make the connection from their lives to the farm.
   - » What does the outside of the watermelon feel like? (hard and smooth)
   - » What does the inside of the watermelon feel like? (soft, gritty, etc.)
   - » How do farmers pick watermelons? (Farmers go into the field and pick watermelons by hand.)

SORTING ACTIVITY

LIFE CYCLE OF A WATERMELON



Standard (M.03): Demonstrates awareness of routines, predictable patterns, and attributes that can be measured.

Sorting and grouping things together are an important cognitive skill. It teaches children to notice similarities and differences, learn to categorize, and develops early literacy and numeracy skills.

THE GOAL

Children predict the pattern of the life cycle of a watermelon by placing photos of the watermelon's life cycle in order from beginning to end.

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity is best implemented as a small to medium center with 1-4 children

1. Print the sorting pages and answer key on the following pages. Optional: laminate these pages.
2. Cut out the images so children can place them on the sorting pages.
3. Show children the life cycle during circle time or the beginning of the activity and then take it away to see if they can remember the order of the life cycle on their own.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Life cycle cards (optional: laminate)
- Sorting mats (optional: laminate)
- Answer key

ENGAGE THE CHILDREN

Engage children to help develop language, socialization, fine motor, and touch sensory skills.

1. Ask children about what they are doing.
2. Ask children to provide explanations.
3. Ask children the following questions to help them make the connection from their lives to the farm.
   - » How does every watermelon life begin? (seed)
   - » Does a watermelon grow from a flower? (yes)
   - » How do watermelons get to the store? (They are shipped from the farm to the grocery store.)

SEED



SPROUT



FLOWER



IMMATURE WATERMELON



MATURE WATERMELON



HARVEST



WASHING



SHIPPED TO STORES


















Fresh
WaterMelons

LIFE CYCLE OF A WATERMELON
ACTIVITY ANSWER KEY

SEED



SPROUT



FLOWER



IMMATURE WATERMELON



MATURE WATERMELON



HARVEST



WASHING



SHIPPED TO STORES



ART ACTIVITY

WATERMELON PLATE



Standard (CA.02): Develops foundational skills that support creative expression through the process, production, and appreciation of visual art forms.

Creating art helps children develop observation and interpretation skills. They learn important concepts like symbolism and abstraction while also strengthening pattern recognition and visual/spatial skills to understand relationships between parts of a whole.

THE GOAL

Children use creative expressions to create a watermelon using a paper plate. Children discover how watermelon is cut into triangles before we enjoy eating them.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Paper plates
- Red, green, and black paint (or black ink)
- Scissors
- Small watermelon for demonstration (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity is best implemented as a medium center with 3-5 children. If possible, cut a real watermelon when demonstrating cutting their paper plates to help children make the connection of what cutting a real watermelon looks like.

1. Give a paper plate to each participating child.
2. Demonstrate how children will paint the outside section of the plate green for the watermelon rind.
3. Show children how they will paint the inner part of the plate red as the center of the watermelon.
4. Children will use their fingertips and black paint or ink to stamp seeds onto their watermelons.
5. Once dried, cut half of the plate into triangular shapes, as shown in the image above.

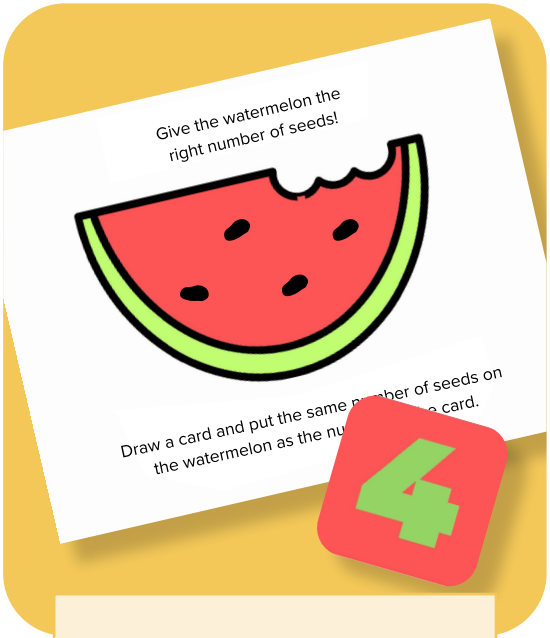
ENGAGE THE CHILDREN

Engage children to help develop language, socialization, fine motor, and touch sensory skills.

1. Ask children about what they are doing.
2. Ask children to provide explanations.
3. Ask children the following questions to help them make the connection from their lives to the farm.
    - » Why do we have to cut a watermelon before we eat it? (This way, we can get to the yummy red part in the center that we enjoy eating.)
    - » What part of the watermelon can we reuse to grow more watermelon? (seeds)
    - » Why do you think the outside of a watermelon is hard? (to protect the flesh and the seeds inside)

COUNTING ACTIVITY

COUNTING WATERMELON SEEDS



Standard (M.01): Demonstrates awareness of quantity, counting, and numeric competencies.

Sorting and grouping things together are an important cognitive skill. It teaches children to notice similarities and differences, learn to categorize, and develops early literacy and numeracy skills.

THE GOAL

Children demonstrate recognition of numbers by pulling a card with a number 1-10 and place the corresponding amount of watermelon seeds on the watermelon mat.

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity is best implemented as a small to medium center with 1-4 children.

1. Print 1-4 copies of the watermelon mat and number cards found on the following pages.
2. Give a watermelon mat, number cards, and 10 watermelon seeds or dry black beans to each child participating.
3. Demonstrate how they pull a card from the number pile, identify the number, and place the correct amount of seeds on the watermelon mat.

MATERIALS NEEDED

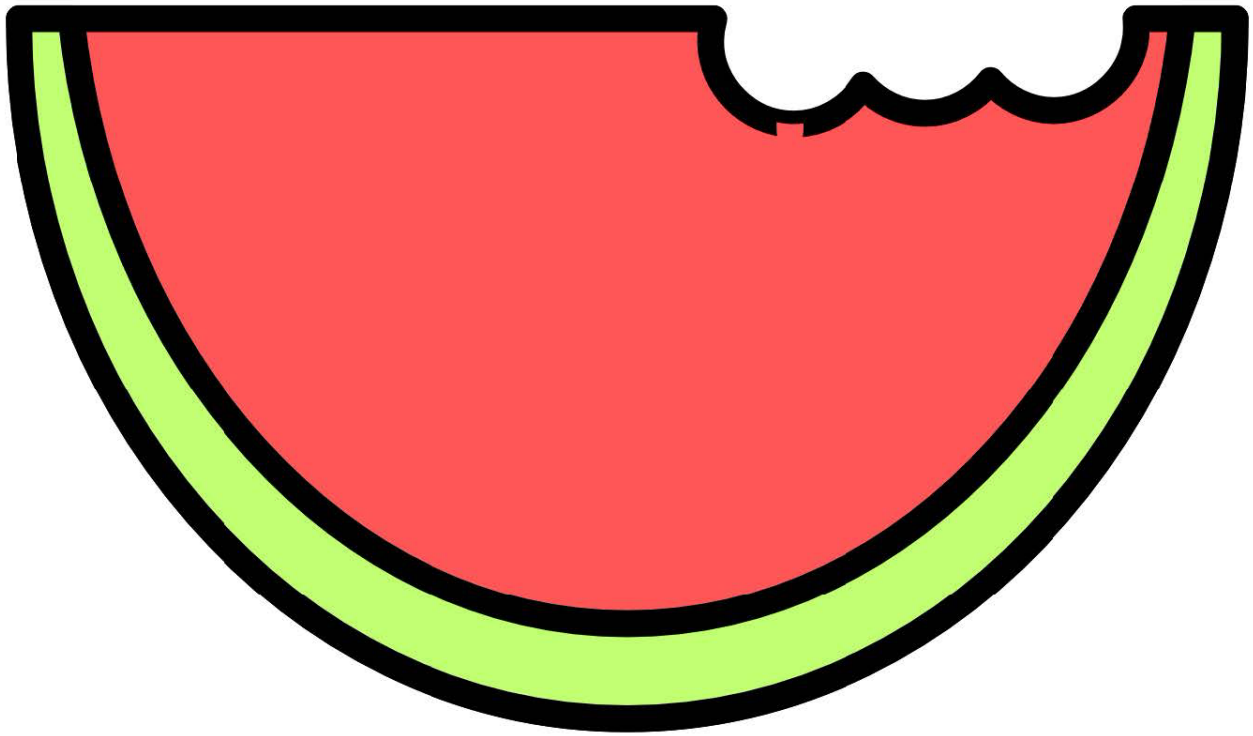
- Watermelon mat (optional: laminate)
- Number cards (optional: laminate)
- Watermelon seeds or dry black beans

ENGAGE THE CHILDREN

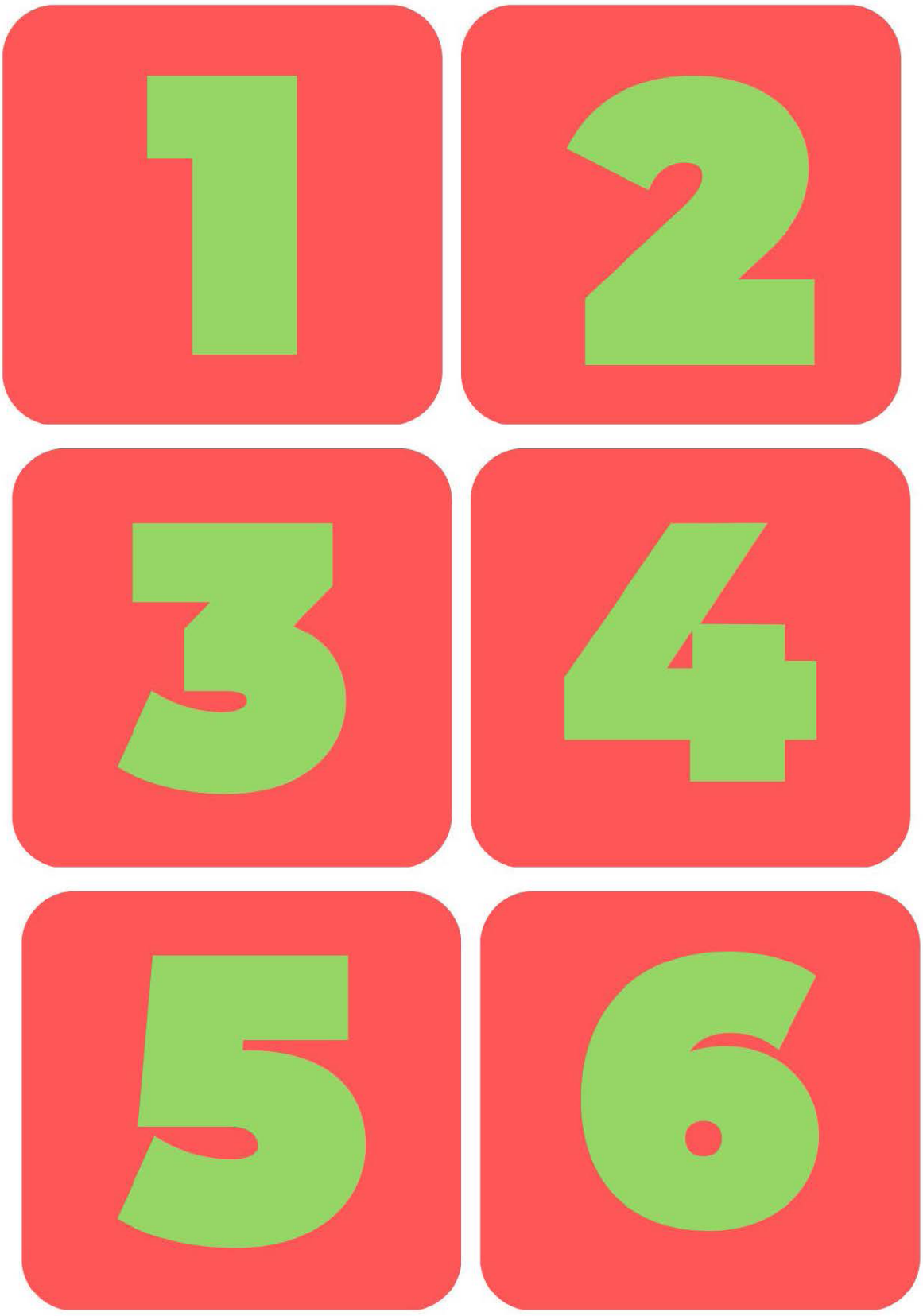
Engage children to help develop language, socialization, fine motor, and touch sensory skills.

1. Ask children about what they are doing.
2. Ask children to provide explanations.
3. Ask children the following questions to help them make the connection from their lives to the farm.
    - » Where do watermelon seeds grow? (inside the flesh of the watermelon and protected by the rind of the watermelon)
    - » What happens if we plant, water, and give sunlight to a watermelon seed? (It will grow into more watermelons.)

Give the watermelon the
right number of seeds!



Draw a card and put the same number of seeds on
the watermelon as the number on the card.


1
2
3
4
5
6


7
8
9
10

TEACHER SCRIPT FOR FARM STORY WITH PROPS



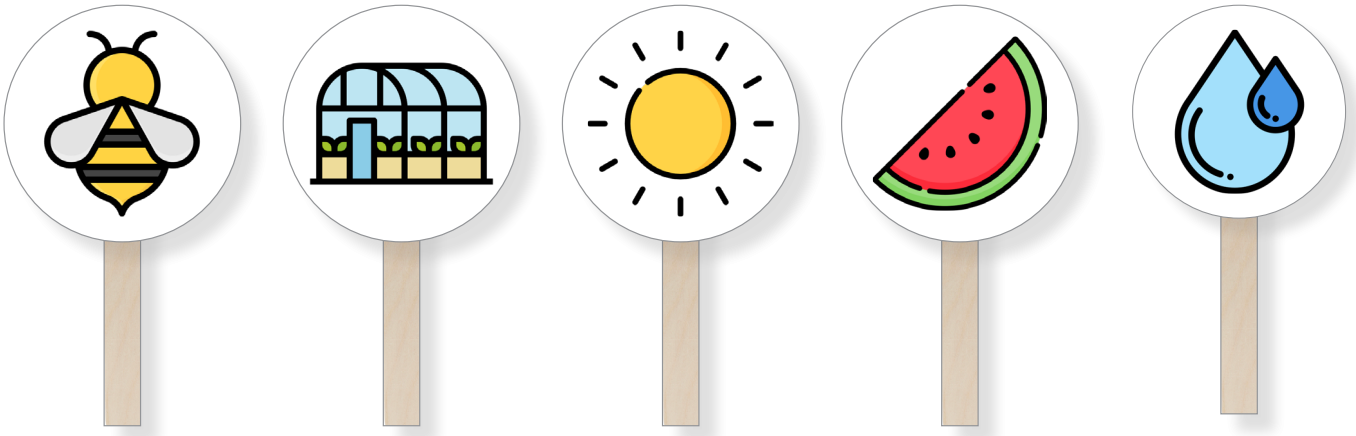
INSTRUCTIONS

Read the story and have students follow along with the photos on the front of this page. Use the circle time activity props to enhance the experience.

- Watermelons need a few things to grow: sun, water, soil, and bees.
- Farmers grow watermelons in rows. A farmer starts the watermelon seeds in a greenhouse in the early spring. Then, when the weather is warmer, the farmer will transplant the tiny watermelon plants from the greenhouse into the ground.
- Watermelons need a lot of water to grow! A farmer might use a drop sprinkler to make sure the watermelons always have enough water. Water helps the melon sprout from the ground and spread on vines.
- Each vine grows a blossom. A pollinator, like a bee, must pollinate the blossom in order for it to turn into a fruit. After two months of being in the ground, a vine will start to produce its first watermelon. Then, within three months, the watermelon is ready to harvest.
- Watermelons aren't as tough as they look, so they are handpicked from the field. Farmers know watermelons are ready to harvest when they get a yellow spot on their rind. The yellow spot means the watermelon is ripe and ready to eat.

CIRCLE TIME PROPS

Ahead of the activity, cut out the shapes and glue each one to a popsicle stick. Distribute the props before you read the story and have students act out the story with the props. Practice sequencing: when students hear their item called, they would stand in order at the front of the room with the teacher.



FARM STORY



MELONS

Learn more about how melons start as a tiny seed on a farm and grow to get to you!

1



Watermelon seeds are started in a greenhouse.

2



When it is 70°F outside, the watermelon plants are transplanted into the ground.

3



The watermelons are watered with a drip irrigation sprinkler.

4

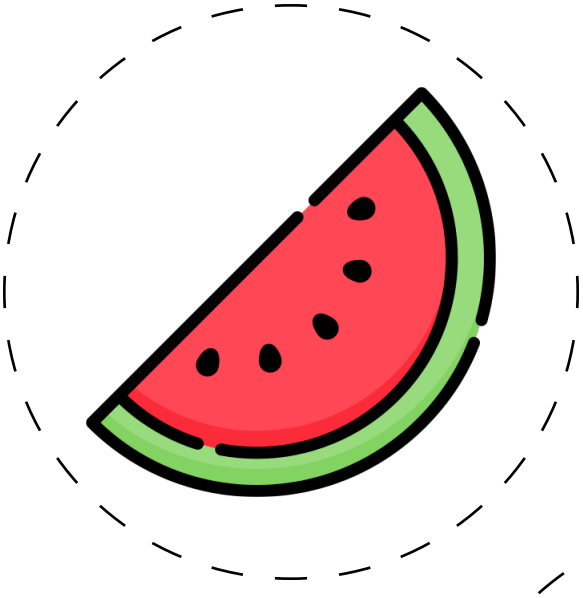


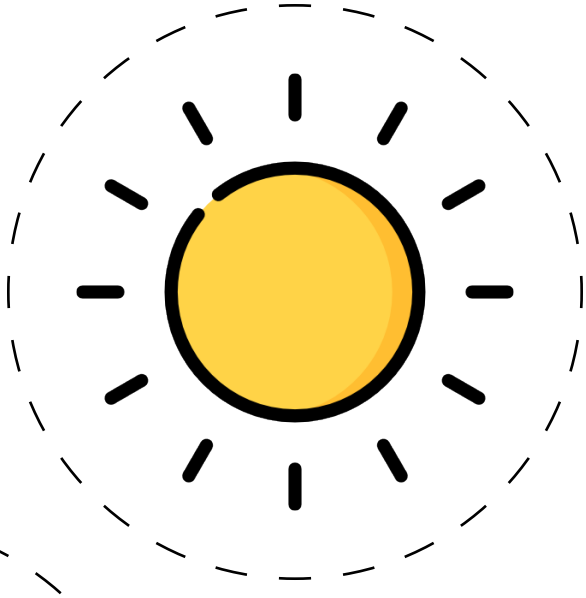
Watermelon plants must blossom and the blossom needs to be pollinated to grow a fruit.

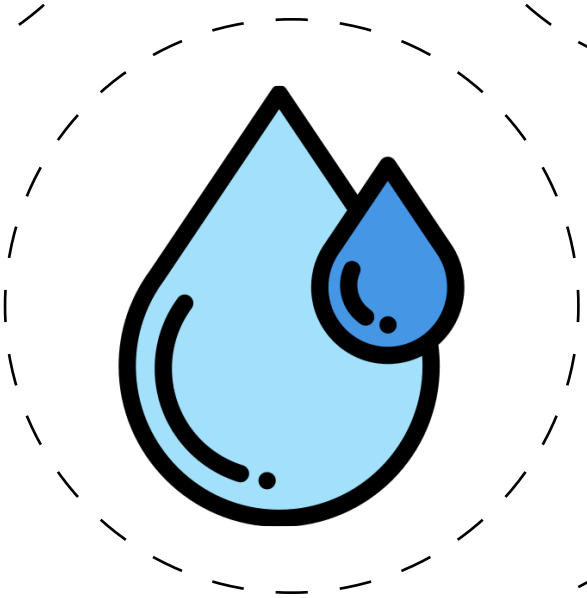
5

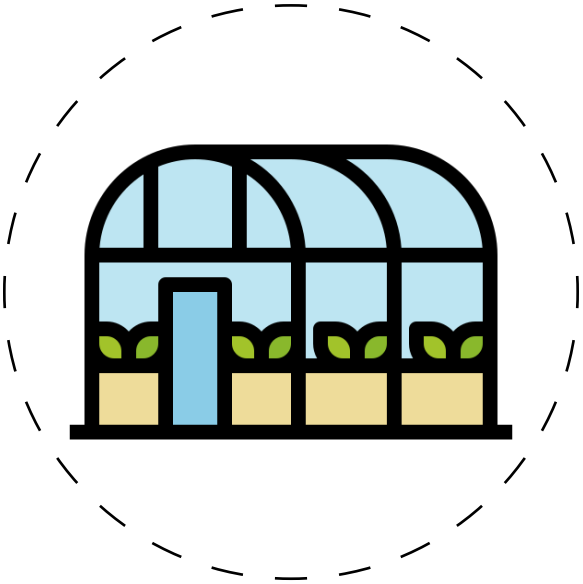


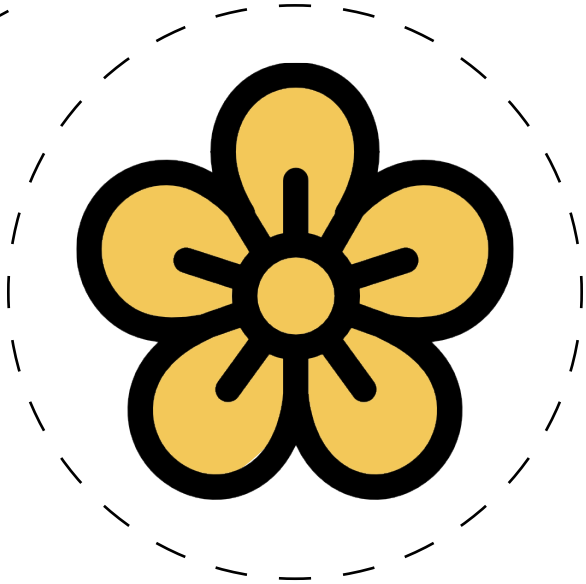
After three months of growing, the watermelon is ready to be picked.



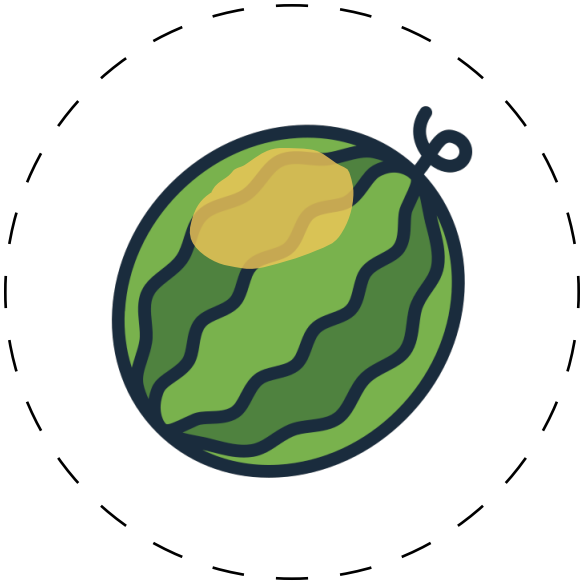








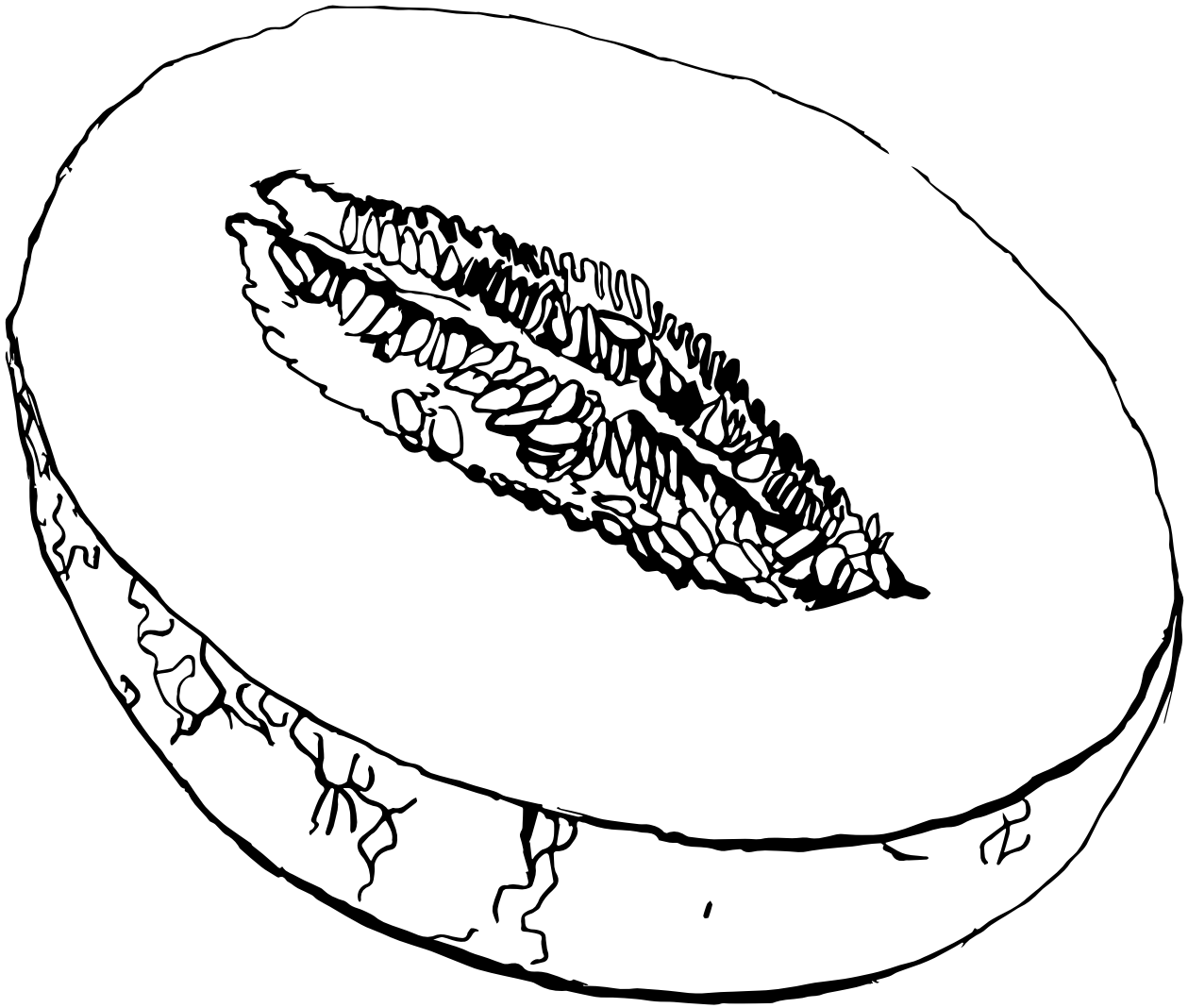




Harvest of the Month

MELONS





DID YOU KNOW -

Bees and other insects are needed to pollinate melons. These insects pollinate the female flowers and then the melon fruit is able to develop.

Farm to School NEBRASKA

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION