

# Zilker Botanical Garden

## Activity Guide – “Stone Soup,” and the Plant Parts We Eat

**Ages:** 3-10

**Approximate Length:** 30 minutes

**Objective:** To introduce people to an assortment of vegetables and learn to locate the parts of plants that human beings use for food.



### Concept Terms:

1. **Seeds** – embryonic plants (baby plants) enclosed in a protective outer covering. Some seeds we eat include black pepper, grain, corn, and peas. Botanically, nuts are not classified as seeds because their hard shell does not automatically release when the seed inside it is ready to sprout. Nuts are generally classified as fruit from a scientific perspective, but there are some nuts that are dehiscent (that is, they split open when ripe) and therefore do count as seeds, like Brazil nuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and peanuts.
2. **Fruits** – the fleshy seed-bearing structure in flowering plants (also known as angiosperms). Some fruits we eat include apples, bananas, strawberries, green peppers, tomatoes, and oranges.
3. **Flowers** – the plant part in flowering plants that provides a way for the plant to reproduce. While they are often known as blossoms that bring beauty to their environment, many of them are edible. Some of the flowers we eat regularly include cauliflower, broccoli, and nasturtiums.
4. **Stems** – the main body or stalk of a plant, typically rising above the ground. Some of the stems we eat include asparagus, broccoli, and figs.
5. **Roots** – the part of a plant that attaches it to the ground or to a support, conveying water and nutrients to the rest of the plant. Some of the roots we eat include turnips, beets, potatoes, and carrots.
6. **Leaves** – this plant part helps the plant produce its own food through photosynthesis. Some of the leaves we eat include spinach, cabbage, and lettuce.

### Background:

1. “Stone Soup” was first published by Madame de Noyer in France, 1720, though “Stone Soup” has been a popular European folk tale for many centuries.
2. The majority of calories we eat come from seeds, primarily from grain (bread, rice, cereal, etc.).
3. Fresh fruits are usually high in fiber, vitamin C, and water.
4. Some of the plants we eat regularly are dangerous if we eat the wrong part. Leaves of tomato plants are poisonous, for example, while the tomato fruit itself is delicious and very good for us.

### Instructions:

1. Read together the story on the next page, “Stone Soup.”
2. Identify the plant parts that show up in the story based on the concept terms above.
  - a. Seeds: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Fruit: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Flowers: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Roots: \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Leaves: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Take a tour of your own pantry, refrigerator, or home garden, and take some time to answer the following questions:
  - a. What is your favorite plant part to eat?
  - b. What colors and shapes are plant parts usually?

4. Using that information, create your own imaginary plant that you would want to add to the Stone Soup. It should have all your favorite plant parts, colors, and shapes.
5. Draw, paint, or otherwise make that plant, including all your favorite plant part elements, and share it with us by posting to social media with #ZilkerGardenStoneSoup

### **Stone Soup**

Once upon a time, there was a comfortable village nestled in the mountains. Everyone who lived there had more than enough to keep them content, but they did not like to share. They locked their doors and windows tight and kept what they had for themselves. One day, two travelers passed into the village. They were tired, dusty, and hungry from their journey. Their hats were torn, and their shoes had holes in the soles. One traveler said to the other, "Surely someone in this village can spare a bit of food."

They stopped at the first house and knocked on the door. The door opened just a crack. "Who are you?" the woman on the other side asked the strangers. "Please, we are hungry, and have been on the road for many days. Do you have any food you might be willing to share with us?" The woman looked darkly at the two strangers and said, "No!" before quickly shutting the door. The travelers walked a little further down the road, and a young boy answered. "Good day," he said shyly. The travelers asked the boy if he had any food in his house that he might be willing to share with them, and the boy replied, "There's no food here," before shutting the door.

The travelers walked all through the village, but everywhere they went, no one had any food they were willing to share with the strangers. They sat to rest beside a well, and one traveler said to the other, "If there's no food in this village, the people who live here must be in greater need than we are. We should make them our magical soup." The two travelers climbed on top of the well, and began to shout, "We are the most incredible cooks in all the land, and if someone could loan us a pot, we will make the best soup you have ever tasted!"

Slowly, a door on the other side of the well opened, and a round man emerged, carrying a large black pot. "I love to eat," he said. "Here's a pot. Let's see what you two master cooks can do with it." The travelers filled the pot with cold water and built a fire. Soon the flames licked the sides of the pot, and billows of steam filled the air. The villagers became curious about what the two strangers were doing, and asked them what was going on. "We're making a magical soup," they replied. "It requires a magical ingredient, which we're certain we'll find here." "In fact, I think I see it now," the taller stranger said, reaching down towards the ground and lifting up an ordinary stone. He tossed it into the pot with a splash. "We're making stone soup! It's delicious, delectable, savory and the most filling soup you've ever eaten!" The crowd around them began to grow larger and larger. "You can't make soup from a stone," one person called out. "We've done it before," replied the travelers, who continued stirring their bubbling stew.

Finally the shorter traveler sighed and said, "It's almost done, but the stone soup would taste much better if we had a carrot, but we cannot find a carrot in this town! We knocked on every door." Then a child came up with some small carrots, and the travelers thanked the child and put the carrots in the pot. The strangers continued cooking, and tasted the hot broth. "It's almost finished," the travelers assured the crowd, "but it would be even nicer if we added some potatoes or cabbage." A man from the crowd approached with some potatoes, and a young couple came forward with some cabbage, which the travelers added to the pot. Soon, the smell of the soup drifted across the village, and more and more people came to see what the travelers were doing.

"Is the stone soup ready now?" someone from the crowd called out. "Yes," the travelers replied, "but it would be even better if we had some corn and peas!" "I have some," yelled a neighbor who was watching from his window. She came down and poured them into the pot.

"Is the stone soup ready now?" someone else asked, for now the crowd was getting increasingly hungry. "Yes," the travelers replied, "but it would be even more delicious if we added some peppers and tomatoes. Does anyone have any peppers or tomatoes?" A farmer who lived near the edge of the village ran to his house and came back with a small basket of peppers and tomatoes, and the travelers diced them and poured them into the pot.

“Is the stone soup ready now?” a child asked, for the smells coming from the pot were becoming increasingly appetizing. “Yes,” the travelers said, “but there would be nothing like a stone soup with some cauliflower or broccoli in it.” One of the hungriest children sprinted home and returned with cauliflower and broccoli to add to the stone soup.

The travelers watched over the pot, which was now so full that it almost spilled over. They tasted it and congratulated each other. “It’s perfect!” Then, they served a bowl of stone soup to every single one of the villagers.

“It’s magic!” the villagers cried out, seeing how much soup the travelers had made. “Delicious!” cried out several people in the crowd. “But where can we get a magic stone? Surely this one has been used up.” The travelers pulled the stone out of the pot, and the villagers realized that the delicious and wonderful soup had not come from the stone at all. From that day on, the villagers shared what they had with each other, and they lived happily ever after.

**Additional Resources:**

1. <https://stonesoup.com/about-the-childrens-art-foundation-and-stone-soup-magazine/history-of-the-stone-soup-story-from-1720-to-now/>
2. [Animated Stories for Kids version of Stone Soup](#)