

Wild Wednesdays

Week 5: *Plant Parts*

By Corinne Flax

Welcome to the fifth week of Wild Wednesdays! This week, we are exploring the physical parts of the plants we grow, and eat as well, and how you can grow your own plants using what you find in your kitchen. This exploration of plant parts is an introduction to next week's deep dive into trees with [Hara Woltz](#). Hara will teach us how to investigate the architecture and structures of trees through different drawing techniques.

Growing plants at home is easy and fun. Understanding the physical parts of plants, and how they work together to support the plant's growth, is an important part of gardening. Let's look at the most basic components of all plants.

A note for learners: This activity requires a few basic household items. Review the list below before starting to make sure you know what you'll need.

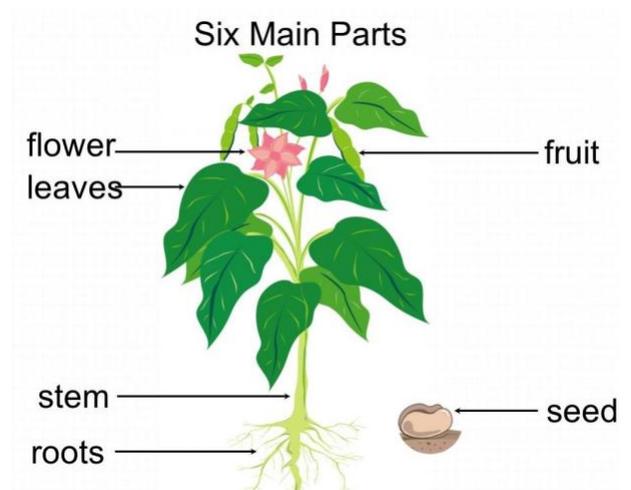
Materials for lesson: household spices, soil, upcycled containers (I used old jars and empty yogurt cups.), paper, pen or pencil, colored pencils or markers, painters or masking tape.

Vocabulary:

Plant Propagation: The process of growing plants from a variety of sources -- seeds, cuttings, and other plant parts.

Seed: The reproductive unit of a flowering plant.

Root: The vascular (carrying water and sap) part of a plant that (typically) grows underground. Roots hold the plant in their position and pull nutrients and liquid from the soil.

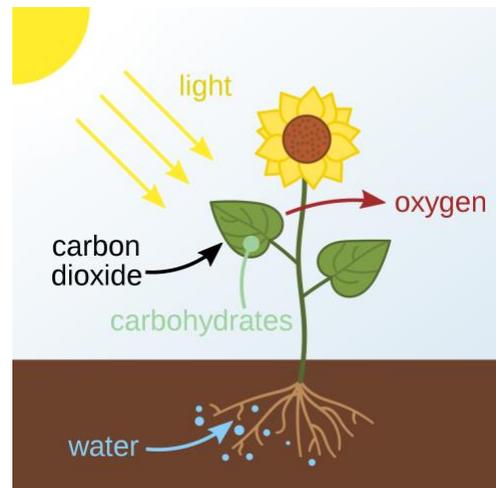


Stem: The main body or stalk of a plant, generally above ground, but occasionally below.

Leaf: Typically flat and green, these plant parts contain chlorophyll and are the primary conductors of photosynthesis, producing energy through the absorption of sunlight utilizing the green pigment, chlorophyll.

Flower: The reproductive organ of a plant (see [Week 3, Pollination Appreciation](#) for an in-depth exploration of these organs), generally surrounded by colorful petals.

Fruit: The seed bearing structure of a plant.



There's an amazing world of plants outside of our homes. If you are interested in growing your own plants, it helps to understand how they grow and thrive. You can find all of the different parts of a plant in your kitchen right now!

Here are some of the plant parts in my kitchen:

- Carrots & Potatoes - Roots
- Celery & Onion - Stems
- Kale & Spinach - Leaves
- Apple, Cantaloupe, Pepper, Lemon, Lime & Cucumber - Fruit
- Cauliflower & Broccoli (frozen!) - Flower
- Almonds & Peanuts - Seeds

Knowing what each plant part does can help you be a plant detective in your own kitchen. Explore your crisper drawer – what plant parts can you find? You can try making your own graphic like the one above, and share it online using [#brucemuseum](#) or send it to cflax@brucemuseum.org.



Don't let the fun stop there – using your knowledge of plant parts you can make a small garden on your kitchen table or in your backyard, using bits of food you might have thrown away and a few teaspoons of whole seed spices.

Growing Plants From Seeds: You need seeds, soil, a container, and a small amount of plastic wrap.



- It's not hard to find seeds to purchase, but did you know you can use seeds you already have in your kitchen?
 - Look inside fruits like peppers and apples when you cut them up at home. Are there any seeds inside that you can try to grow?
 - Check out your spice rack; some spices are powders, but many spices are whole seeds.
 - Do you have any whole seed spices that you can grow?
- Collect all the different types of seeds you've found in your kitchen that you want to grow.
- Fill your containers $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way with soil.
 - You can buy soil at a garden center or scoop some up from your backyard.
 - Plants don't like soil that is packed down too hard; their roots need to breathe!
- Put your seeds on top of the soil, then, cover them up with more soil so that it is almost to the top of your container.
 - Plant seeds that you find in your kitchen thickly (lots of seeds on top of the soil) because they weren't originally intended to grow. (But they will!)
- Label your container with the name of the plant you are growing.
 - You can decorate your containers any way you want or leave them plain.
- Water the seeds so that the soil is moist, but not soaked.
 - Most plants don't like to be too wet.
- Place a small piece of plastic wrap over your containers and move them to a semi-sunny place.
 - Seeds need sun to germinate, but don't want to be too hot.
 - The plastic wrap will help regulate humidity and temperature for your seeds and ensure you don't have to water too often.

- You should see water beading up on the plastic wrap in just a few hours.
- Wait! Your seeds will take between 1-2 weeks to start growing its first leaves.
 - Once your seeds start growing, you can take off the plastic wrap.
 - Make sure you water your plants once or twice a week.
- If you have space, you can do this whole process in the ground outside, move your seedlings to a larger container when they get bigger, or just watch and see what happens if you leave your seedlings in small containers.

Growing plants from scraps: you will need containers and water to grow plants from scraps.

- Plants can be propagated from seeds, but also from cuttings.
 - A cutting is a piece of the plant, usually a slice of root or stem, that will grow when placed in water.
 - This is an activity that is best done indoors.
- Plants like carrots, onions, garlic, potatoes, romaine lettuce, and more can be grown from scraps.
 - In the pictures on the right, you can see how carrot tops and green onion bottoms were regrown in containers of water.
 - Not all plants that regrow this way can be replanted, but some can.



Explore the links below to see which plants can be replanted and which should remain in your home.

[Seeds](#)

[Roots](#)

[Growing Plants](#)

[Tiny Garden](#)

[Scrap Gardening](#)