

## Is it Ready?

**Adapted from:** [Eat.Think.Grow. "Is it Ready to Eat Yet?"](#)

**Overview:** Students learn the terms ripe, under-ripe, and overripe and the benefits of eating foods that are harvested at their peak ripeness. Then students search the garden for examples of ripe, under-ripe, and overripe fruits and vegetables.

**Subject area:** Nutrition

**Grade level:** K-2<sup>nd</sup>

**Objectives:** Students will be able to identify and harvest a fruit or vegetable in the school garden that is at its peak ripeness and describe the color, size, shape, texture, smell and other defining characteristics that signal when the fruit or vegetable is ripe, still under-ripe, or overripe.

**Background Information for Teacher:** Generally under-ripe foods are small and hard, and do not release easily from the plant. They taste sour and unpleasant. Overripe foods are soft and watery, and tend to fall off the plant. They may taste strong or unpleasant. The texture of overripe foods can also be hard and woody such as a large dry pea or carrot that has grown too big. Lettuce, broccoli, cauliflowers and kale will flower or bolt when they are overripe. Ripe foods are designed to taste and smell good and to have a pleasing texture such as cherries, tomatoes, and peppers. They tend to release easily off the plant. Encourage students to explore and understand the difference between a fruit or vegetable that is ripe and pleasing to eat, such as a carrot, and when a person does not like the flavor, such as a bolting lettuce.

**Prep time:** 30 minutes

**Lesson time:** 40 minutes

**Materials needed:**

- Plants in the garden that are overripe, under-ripe, and ready to be harvested
- Cards with pictures of produce that can be found in the garden (included below in English and Spanish)
- White board and dry-erase marker
- Harvesting Supplies:
  - Bowls/colanders – one per team
  - Garden shears – one per team

**Space needed:** School Garden

**Staff needed:** 1

**Presentation steps:**

1. Engage student interest by asking students if they have ever been to see a fireworks display, such as at the Fourth of July. Ask if they had to wait for the fireworks to start. Was it hard to wait? Point out that, even though it can be hard to wait until it gets dark enough for the fireworks to start, it's better to wait until then because the fireworks do not look as bright against a sky that still has sunlight.
2. Then, compare the fireworks to picking fruits and vegetables that you want to eat. Ask students what might happen if they pick fruits and vegetables too soon. Ask what would happen if people waited until the night was almost over before they shot off fireworks. Point out that people can wait too long to pick many fruits and vegetables, too. When that happens, they often do not taste as good, and sometimes they even go rotten. Tell students they are going to learn how to tell when some foods in the school garden are ready to pick.
3. Lead a short discussion to help students discover the meaning of the term *harvest* for picking fruits and vegetables. Discuss what we can do with the fruits and vegetables we harvest. Eat or cook with them right away, store them to eat later, and/or gather their seeds to start new plants.
4. Define ripe, under-ripe, and overripe. Tell students that today we are focusing on harvesting foods that are ripe, or ready to eat right now. Help students to understand that ripe fruits or vegetables taste the best they ever will. That is why many people refer to the "peak of ripeness." Then, introduce or review the prefixes under- and over-. Tell students that under- means "below" or "not enough." Ask what under-ripe would mean (not ripe enough). Then tell them that over- means "above" or "too much," and have them tell you what overripe means (too ripe).
5. Tell students that they will be hunting in teams for foods in the garden that are ripe, under-ripe, and overripe. Review garden rules (in particular the rule about picking foods without asking), and assign teams and volunteer leaders. Instruct students to NOT harvest or pick anything, even if they consider it ripe or overripe.
6. Hand each team cards for the types of fruit or vegetables they are to find. When they find them, they need to identify whether they are ripe, under-ripe, or overripe.
7. Have each team find the plants on their assigned cards.
8. Spend some time harvesting (still in small groups) with the assistance of a teacher

**Conclusion:** Gather the class back together. Review each fruit or vegetable on the card. Ask the group whether it was ripe, overripe, or under-ripe. Ask the students how they know. Have one example of each fruit or vegetable to hold up and guide this process.

Strawberries



Under-ripe



Ripe



Too ripe

Broccoli



Under-ripe



Ripe



Too Ripe



Tomato



Under-ripe



Ripe



Too ripe

# Lettuce



Under-ripe



Ripe



Too ripe



Fresas



verde



maduro



demasiado  
maduro

Brócoli



verde



maduro



demasiado  
maduro



Tomate



verde



maduro



demasiado  
maduro

# Luchuga



verde



maduro



demasiado  
maduro