



Learning from the past:

Interview Master Gardeners to learn about gardening in the past

Objective:

Youth will:

- learn interview skills
- compare and contrast past and present approaches to gardening
- have an opportunity to interact with older gardeners
- have an opportunity to visit the Albany Master Gardener demonstration garden
- gain a historic perspective on how food and gardening practices have changed over time

Overview:

By interviewing older Master Gardeners in the community, youth will gain interview skills and will hear about gardening techniques and memories of previous generations.

Time:

- 20 minutes - preparing interview questions
- One hour - interviewing
- 20 minutes - sharing interview stories
- 30 minutes – making thank you cards

Background:

The way in which food gets from field to table has changed a lot over one or two generations. Farming has changed and so has the food we eat. There is tremendous value in learning lessons about how people did things in the past. Oral history is a great way to do that! There's no doubt that the way our grandparents ate, gardened, and related to food is much different than nowadays. Finding out what they did differently, might provide some insight to more sustainable practices that could help to stop climate change!

Preparation:

- Get in touch with some older Master Gardeners that are willing to speak with kids. Arrange to meet them at the Albany Master Gardener's demonstration garden.
- Plan for a 20-minute session to prepare the youth for the interview. During this planning session, discuss the following:

Ask the children what an interview is and what makes a good interview question. Give some examples and ask them to do the same. Tell them they will be meeting with older

Master Gardeners from Albany. They will get a chance to interview them and ask them questions about the way things used to be done in the garden. As a group, develop potential interview questions with students. Here are guidelines to offer the students as they come up with their questions:

- Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” Instead build your questions around who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- Think about what you’re most interested in learning from the Master Gardeners.
- Be curious about what it was like to be a kid when they were young, where they lived, and how their families gardened.
- Think about the practices you use in your school garden or that your family uses at home, and ask what techniques your elder friends used for the same purpose (e.g., weed and pest control, watering, composting, mulching, etc).
- A good way to start is to think about what might be different for the youth.
- Some sample questions:
 - What is your earliest memory of food?
 - Did you eat junk food?
 - Where did buy food?
 - Did you grow food?
 - Did you store any food that you grew?
 - How has life changed – gardening and food habits?
 - How have gardening practices changed?
 - What is different between gardening now and when you were our age? What is similar?
 - Did you raise animals in addition to having a garden?
 - How did the livestock relate to the garden (e.g., used manure as fertilizer, had to fence out chickens)?
 - Did they preserve their harvest, and if so, what techniques did they use? Did they have a root cellar?
 - Did they grow ornamental plants (flowers), or was gardening focused on food production?
 - How much of their annual food supply did they grow/raise themselves?
 - How did gardeners learn to garden? From family or books?
 - Did all the neighbors have gardens?

Interview:

Meet with Master Gardeners at their demonstration garden site. Students will have their questions with them and will interview them in pairs.

Wrap-up:

Once back in the classroom, talk about the experience of meeting older gardeners. Ask the students to share the stories they heard. Ask questions to trigger their memories:

- What did you learn about gardening or plants from your elder friends?
- How has life changed – gardening and food habits?
- How have gardening practices changed?
- What was it like to spend time with a senior citizen?

After your wrap-up discussion, set aside an arts and crafts time to make thank-you cards for the Master Gardeners.