

Transplanting, or Let's Move 'Em Out!

Description

Students transplant seedlings from flats to garden.

Objective

To learn how to transplant seedlings.

Teacher Background

In transplanting, it is important to handle the roots as little as possible and to give the plants the space they need in their new home. Teach students to hold plants at the base of the stem. For younger students, you may want to dig the holes where the plant is to be planted. Use the Vegetable Planting Guide in the Appendix to determine spacing needs. The Companion Planting Guide will assist you in intercropping plants so that plants that are beneficial to each other are planted together. Seedlings need to be transplanted when they are overcrowded in the flat, have their first true leaves, or both. Note: The first leaves to emerge are called *cotyledons*. They are not the true leaves.

Materials

Seedlings ready to be transplanted from a flat
Trowels

Preparation

Prepare a garden bed for transplanting. (Note: Seedlings may be transplanted into another flat if it is too cold or wet outdoors.)



We are ready to give our seedlings a new home. What are some important things to consider? (The bed should be prepared so that the roots can grow; compost should be added to the soil to provide nutrients.) The seedling is like a baby. How do we handle it carefully? (Dig it carefully from the flat; don't touch the roots.) Picture the plants when they will be big. What kind of space will our plants need? When the plants are put back in the ground, how will we get the soil to stick to the roots? (Press the plant firmly into the soil; water it well.)



1. Mark the spaces in the bed where plants will be planted.
2. Have students dig a hole two times the size of the root ball for each plant.
3. Demonstrate how to slide the trowel gently into the soil at the edge of the flat and lift up a clump of seedlings shading their roots from the sun to prevent them from drying out.
4. Demonstrate how to separate the plants carefully. "Think them apart," trying not to break too many roots and keeping as much soil around them as possible.
5. Hand each student a seedling, making sure to hold it by the stem.
6. Help students plant each plant gently by holding it at the stem, having the roots fall straight down, gently covering the roots with dirt up to the first set of leaves, and pressing the soil firmly around the plant.
7. Water the plants well and label them.



Why was it necessary to transplant the seedlings? How did you determine how much space to leave between plants? How will you care for your transplanted plants?



Allow the seedlings in one flat to overgrow, and have students observe the effects of overcrowding on them. For an activity on the effects of overcrowding, see p. 145, Room to Live.