

Materials

- 1 large worktable
- 2 pairs of pruning scissors, 2 small baskets
- Propane camping stove and long lighter
- Large pot filled with tap water
- Large ladle, fine wire strainer
- 2 large glass teapots
- Small tea cups (1 per student)

Preparation

- Fill the large pot with tap water and place it on the stove
- Set aside 2 small sprigs of lemon verbena and mint for Part 1

PROCEDURE

Part 1: Harvest and Sort Tea Ingredients

- Gather as a class around the herb bed. If herbs are scattered throughout the garden, gather in spacious common area instead. "In the garden, every plant serves a different purpose. Edible crops sustain us, flowers attract beneficial pollinators, and herbs are of great culinary and medicinal value. Even weeds have their benefits, as they decompose in our compost pile and release valuable plant nutrients back into the soil."
- "Today's lesson will focus on herbs, or plants that are especially valued for their scent or flavor. We will be making tea with two flavorful herbs -- lemon verbena and mint." Introduce lemon verbena and pass it around for students to examine. "How would you describe the smell? Does it remind you of anything?" Collect verbena and introduce mint. Repeat. "Have you smelled this herb before? Have you ever eaten it as a part of a meal?"
- As a class, gather around lemon verbena plant(s). Point out unique features of the plant that make it stand out from others. Then, demonstrate how to use the pruning scissors to cut a small sprig from the plant. Repeat the process for mint. "Everyone will harvest one sprig. Hold onto your sprig at its base, as to prevent damage."
- Split students into 2 groups and pair an adult leader with each. *Students harvest herbs with adult supervision. Groups return to the large worktable when finished.* Demonstrate how to gently remove leaves from the sprigs. Distribute a small basket to each group for leaf collection. Discard of damaged leaves in compost pile.

Part 2: Make and Serve Tea

- As students remove leaves, fire up the propane camping stove. "When making tea, water should be *nearly* boiling. Boiling water overcooks the leaves, releasing unpleasant off-flavors into the tea." Heat the pot of water over high heat until *almost* boiling. As water heats, explain the history of tea.
- Turn off stove. Collect herb baskets and place them on the worktable. Invite students up the worktable one at a time. Allow each to add a small handful of herbs to the hot water. "As the herbs steep, they release their unique flavors into the hot water. The longer they steep, the stronger and more flavorful the brew will be."
- Seat students around picnic tables or in a comfortable area of the garden. Place a wire strainer over glass teapots to catch any loose leaves. Then, carefully ladle the tea from the large pot into the glass teapots.
- Select two students to carefully pour tea from the glass teapots into small cups. Select two additional students to distribute cups of tea to the class. Enjoy your tea! Encourage students to sip slowly. When finished, collect cups and gather materials. Discard of used tea leaves in the compost pile.

Making Tea: Lemon Verbena and Mint

Patterns & Preparation

ENGAGE

Divide a piece of flip chart paper into four sections. Label each section with one of the four seasons. Work together as a group to make a list describing each season. Some questions include: *What is the weather like during this time of year? What activities do people do? What foods do people eat? What do the trees look like? What does the garden look like?*

Focus on the transition from fall to winter and discuss ways in which humans prepare for colder weather. Collect 3–4 different herb samples from the garden and set aside. “There are many different types of herbs in the

Objectives

- Students will be able to define *herb*
- Students will be able to list common uses of herbs (scent, flavor, or medicinal purposes)
- Students will be able to identify lemon verbena and mint plants
- Students will understand how to prepare lemon verbena and mint tea

EXPLAIN

Tea: A Brief History

After water, tea is the mostly widely consumed beverage in the world. Although tea’s exact origins still remain a mystery, its rise to international stardom began over 5,000 years ago in parts of Southeast Asia. In its early days, tea was primarily enjoyed throughout India, China, Korea, and Japan. It wasn’t until the 19th century that tea was spread to Western Europe and beyond. Tea has been a valuable trading commodity ever since.

Agriculturally, the term “tea” refers to products derived from the tea plant, *Camellia sinensis*. Parts of this plant are processed in different ways in order to create specific varieties of tea – black, green, and oolong teas are the most common examples. Over the years, “tea” has also been used to describe infusions of aromatic herbs in hot water. Herbal infusions, such as the one featured in the lesson, are often referred to as “tisane” (pronounced tis-zahn) teas. Herbal “tisane” teas can be prepared using various combinations of herbs, flowers, and fruit. Technically speaking, tisanes are not true “teas”, as they do not feature leaves from the actual tea plant.

Lemon Verbena and Mint

Lemon Verbena is a perennial shrub native to South America. Its strong, lemony aroma makes it a popular ingredient in savory dishes, desserts, and teas. Mint is a popular perennial herb that first originated in parts of the Mediterranean. Mint is widely valued for its culinary and medicinal uses. Mint spreads via underground stems called *runners*. Given its tendency for vigorous growth, mint is considered by some gardeners to be invasive.

ADDITIONAL CONTENT INTEGRATION *(see previous page)*

After ladling the tea into glass teapots, add a small dollop of honey to each. Gently stir to dissolve.

Additional Materials

- Small samples of garden herbs (lavender, rosemary, sage, thyme, etc.)
- Honey and a stirring spoon

EVALUATE

Journal prompt: Have you ever tasted tea before? Write about your tea tasting experience, using as many different adjectives as possible to describe the flavor and aroma of the lemon verbena and mint tea.