1st Peas to the Table

Grade Level: 3-5th

Season: Spring

Larger IGS Unit: Seeds, Garden, Food Systems

Essential Question(s): Where does food come from? Who grows our food?

Objective: Through the 1st Peas to the Table competition, students will understand the connection between the food that we eat and the people who grow it – both today and throughout history. Students will be able to design a system for growing shelling peas most efficiently, during the cold and unpredictable months of spring. Students will interact with other schools through writing letters and sharing their experiences of growing peas. They will also know how to observe and measure the growth of their plants and compare them with those of the other classes.

Standards:
5th grade standards:
Science – support an argument with evidence that plants get the materials they need for growth and reproduction chiefly through a process in which they use air, water and energy from the sun to produce sugars and plant materials.

Social studies – draw evidence from literary text to support reflection and research. Compare/contrast colonial culture, economic development.

Math – represent and interpret data

Materials:
- Seed packets, seed catalogs
- First Peas to the Table: How Thomas Jefferson Inspired a School Garden, by Susan Grigsby
- “1st Peas Intro” powerpoint
- Engineering process pdf
- Shelling pea seeds
- Trellis materials
- Measuring tools
- “1st Peas Measuring Worksheet”
- Journals
- Growth chart
- “Pea Pen Pals” template

Developed by Island Grown Schools 2016
Introduction:

First Peas to the Table is a competition that Thomas Jefferson participated in with his fellow agriculturalists in the area surrounding Monticello. The goal of the contest was to be the first grower to produce one cup of shelled peas in their garden. The competition is depicted in Susan Grigsby’s popular children’s book, *First Peas to the Table: How Thomas Jefferson Inspired a School Garden*. In the story, a class of students explores how to plant, tend and harvest shelling peas.

Each spring we bring Thomas Jefferson’s First Peas to the Table competition to students in 3rd through 5th grade at our island’s schools. One grade from each school will work with their garden coordinator to enter the competition. Schools will be competing against each other to be the first to harvest a cup of shelled peas!

Activity 1: Read *First Peas to the Table*, by Susan Grigsby

Activity 2: Research Peas

- Who eats peas? What kinds of peas?
  - Sugar
  - Snow
  - Shelling
- Explore different varieties of shelling peas
  - Students break in pairs/small groups and research a variety to find out 1) Days to Maturity; 2) Height; 3) A fun fact about their variety
- As a class, student identify what they need to grow their optimal peas
  - Sunlight, water, healthy soil
  - Trellis, structure to climb
  - Using hoop-houses/greenhouses
- Explore Engineering Process
  - Ask (How can we grow the most peas, the fastest?)
  - Imagine (Brainstorm ideas)
  - Plan (Draw a diagram of garden, gather materials)
  - Create (Follow the plan, test it out)
  - Improve (What can work better for next year?)

Activity 3: Historical Lens – Introduction to Food Justice

- Where is Monticello?
- What is a plantation?
- Who grew Jefferson’s peas (and carrots, lettuce, etc.)?
- Introduction to Wormley Hughes
  - Wormley was born at Monticello. His family was owned and he was owned. By the time he was in (what is today) 5th grade, he was working in the nailery: 30 strikes per nail, 800 nails per day, 6 days week, 52 weeks per year.
- Use a 3 pound sledge hammer that the kids can pick up and swing. Imagine doing that 144,000 times per week. Every week. For years.
- Then move on to Wormley the Gardener. He worked side by side with Jefferson in laying out the west lawn flower beds. He worked and managed the 1,000 sq. foot kitchen garden running Jefferson’s experiments and helping to feed all the people at Monticello.
- Then move on to Wormley the manager. He moved on from the Garden to running the stable and also on special projects like blasting out a canal with black powder.

- Slavery – throughout history and today
  - Passed by Congress on January 31, 1865, and ratified on December 6, 1865, the 13th amendment abolished slavery in the United States and provides that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."
  - Does Wormley exist today? Who grows our food today?
  - Discuss immigrant workers

**Activity 4: In the garden**
- Explore “Fruits” “Roots” and “Leaves” as vegetables
  - Connect to “Moon Gardening” Unit from 1st grade
- Prep beds
- Plant peas in “Fruits” bed
- Build trellis

**Activity 5: Measuring and observing**
- This could be a daily activity that students do in small groups, or a weekly activity that is done with a coordinator and the whole class
- Utilize the “1st Peas Measuring Worksheet”
- If students use science or garden journals, they can record their observations and measurements in their journals
- Measurements are charted on a larger graph that may be posted in the hallway, or may move from classroom to classroom. It is important that the students are able to watch the progress of each school’s peas and compare their growth!

**Activity 6: Pea Pen Pals**
- Using the “Pea Pen Pals” template, students write observations of their peas and share their observations with fellow students
- IGS coordinates the pen pals, so that each school is paired with another school, and they are given the opportunity to send and receive at least one letter from their fellow pea growers
Wrap up/ Assessment:
Assessment includes the observation sheets, journal entries, and/or pen pal letters, as well as class discussions.
The final component of the unit is the celebration, to be hosted in mid-June. Prizes and awards will be given to all participating schools. A grand trophy will be awarded to the school that successfully harvests the first cup of shelled shelling peas.

Extensions: