Introduction to Herbs

Grade Level: 1st
Season: Spring
Larger IGS Unit: Garden, Seeds

Essential Question: What are herbs? How do they grow? How can we use them? How can we identify different plants?

Objective: Students will use their senses to describe and identify different herbs. Students will understand the importance of herbs and will help to create/maintain the school herb garden.

NGSS: 1-LS3-1 Use information from observations (first-hand and from media) to identify similarities and differences among individual plants or animals of the same kind.

Materials:
Variety of herbs
Sign making materials for the school garden (shingles and Sharpie markers or wooden signs and paint)

Introduction:
(All students must wash their hands before this activity begins)
Ask students, “What is an herb?” Share some types of herbs and ask students to raise their hand if they have heard of these herbs before. If so, ask students to explain the context.

Explain that herbs are a type of plant that are primarily used for seasoning or medicine. They have very strong smells and tastes, which help us identify them in the garden!

Activity:
In a group circle, divide students into groups. The number of groups depends on how many varieties of herbs you have. 4 types of herbs = 4 groups
Ask students: What tools do they think scientists might use to identify plants?

Explain that these are not tools that we have in the greenhouse or a laboratory, these are tools that everyone has on their own body.

Explore the senses with the students. “How can our eyes help us identify plants? How can we use our ears/nose/mouth/fingers?”

Invite students to use their senses to identify their herbs.
Ask students to close their eyes, and put their hands out to receive their herb. “First, we will use our sense of smell. With your eyes closed, see if you can recognize the smell of your herb.”
“Next we use our sense of touch. With your eyes closed, see if you can recognize the feel of your herb.”
“Next we use our sense of hearing. With your eyes closed, see if you can recognize the sound of your herb.”
“Next we use our sense of taste. With your eyes closed, see if you can recognize the taste of your herb” *(Do not eat the entire herb!)*
“Finally, open your eyes and see if you recognize the herb.”

One at a time, each group shares their observations of their herb using words to describe the feel, look, smell, taste, and sound of their herb. The observations are written up on a large sheet of paper. These are the students’ clues for their next challenge.

If you have an existing school garden with herbs growing in it, once all groups have shared observations, invite the students out into the garden. Using the clues they came up with in class, they must now find their herb! Once it is found, the group works together to create a sign for the herb in the garden.

**Wrap up/ Assessment:**
Students share observations from their sensory exploration.
Students create signs for their herbs, which may include words they used to describe it.

**Extensions:**
Prepare the school garden herb bed for the season, or plant a new one!