**GROWING VARIETY**

The following is a list of suggested crop varieties to grow with children that will provide striking visual, tactile and tasty examples of biodiversity in the garden! The five crops selected are easy for children to grow and provide spring (lettuce and radish) and summer/fall (bean, pea, sunflower) harvests.

This is by no means an exhaustive list but a starting point for introducing biodiverse varieties into a children’s garden. Kids love the diversity of colours, shapes, flavours and interesting histories of these varieties as well as the silliness and fun of some of their names. There is a lot more excitement in eating a bean called *Dragon tongue* than a plain old green, string bean!

**BEANS**

Beans are the classic first crop most children plant because they are easy and reliable growers. Beans come in an incredible array of colours and shapes and their dried seeds are equally diverse and beautiful. Bush beans are the easiest type of bean to grow because they do not require trellising or support.

**Royal Burgundy –** Prolific purple bean that turns green when cooked!

**Dragon Tongue –**  Juicy fat green pods with purple stripes. Kids love the name.

**Blue Jay –**  Blue and brown seeds grow a tasty green bean saved from extinction by Canadian seed savers!

**Flambo –** Bright pink pods and seeds are striking.

**LETTUCE**

Lettuce is a quick, easy to grow crop best planted in cool weather in early spring. Lettuce will allow your students to have a taste from the garden before summer vacation.

**Speckled Lettuce –** An old Dutch variety brought to Canada in 1799 with lime green leaves and red speckles.

**Merlot Lettuce –** A very dark, purple-red, frilly lettuce, extremely high in antioxidants.

**Deer Tongue –** Triangular, upright green leaves. Kids love the name.

**Oak Leaf Lettuce** – Distinctively shaped oak leaf lettuce can be found in green or red varieties.

**PEAS**

Peas grow best in cool weather so plant in early spring. Most peas require trellising to support their growth and some can climb very high so plan accordingly if you plant a tall variety!

**Telephone Pole –** An heirloom variety that grows not quite as tall as a telephone pole but still very tall!

**Tom Thumb –** A dwarf growing pea that is well suited to growing in pots and does not require trellising, only grows to 8 inches.

**Blue Podded –** A rare sight for most children, blue-podded pea varieties grow spectacular purplish-blue pods.

**Green Arrow** – Green arrow is a popular and reliable English heirloom.

**RADISHES**

Radish is another quick, easy to grow crop best planted in cool weather in early spring. Students will be able to harvest radishes before summer vacation. Digging up a diversity of different coloured radishes is particularly fun for kids, much like digging for treasure!

**White Icicle –** A slender white radish with a milder taste than most radishes.

**Purple Plum –** Round globes with bright purple skin and white flesh .

**Cherry Belle** – This is a common, reliable and fast growing radish with round, smooth, red exterior and white flesh.

**French Breakfast** – This heirloom radish, grown since the 1880’s, is cyclindrical in shape with red tops and white tips.

**SUNFLOWERS**

Don’t forget about flowers! In addition to being beautiful, they will help attract bees and butterflies to your garden. The diversity in flower colour, shape and size clearly and beautifully illustrate the potential for diversity within a crop.

**Mammoth or Giganteus –** Either of these varieties will grow impressively large flowers and towering stalks 9-12 feet tall!

**Mexican Torch –** Bright red-orange flowers and an excellent lure for butterflies.

**Italian White –** White petals and dark brown centers.

**Teddy Bear –** Kids love the name and the unusual fluffy, cushiony flower heads .