

Zapatista Farming (Part 2 of the "What We Eat Series")

Why the Zapatistas value their traditional food, and how they grow it.

Levels: 9-12

Subjects: School gardens, ecology.

Objectives: This lesson aims to familiarize learners with Zapatista farming practices, using a short video to illustrate this. It will address:

- a) What the Zapatistas grow.
- b) How they grow it.
- c) What their basic food is.
- d) Zapatista organic farming and cultivating without agrochemicals.

Learners are also encouraged to explore the origins of some foodstuffs of the Zapatistas, which do not originate in Chiapas.

Note: This lesson plan does not include a first introduction to the Zapatista movement. It would be best to use it in conjunction with other lessons that give the students some background to the Zapatistas.

This lesson plan can be used as the second block of a three-block lesson, which culminates with the students making a small window-box style garden with some edible plants commonly farmed and eaten by Zapatista farmers.

Procedure:

- Show the Youtube video 'Zapata's Garden' (19mins), which has subtitles in English. It gives a brief background as to how the lives of these farmers have changed since the Zapatista uprising and why they feel having control over their food supply liberates them from imports and multinationals. It also explains in brief how the Zapatistas work collectively on the land that they have regained, that they are self-sufficient in that they produce most of what they need to live, and why they have decided to grow organically, without agrochemicals.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uqR96FqjVo>

- Not all the main food products that are seen in this video or traditionally grown in Chiapas are originally from there. If there is time, the students could research where some of the other plant species originate, such as radishes, and cabbage, which are eaten a lot in Chiapas. The Zapatista families are seen drinking *pozol*, a corn-based drink, as their morning snack although it is not named in the video.

- Have the class discuss as one large group or in smaller groups (depending on class size) what they learnt from this video. Some pre-viewing questions to direct attention might be why do the Zapatistas think it's important to grow their own food; how do they work their land; and what do they grow?

Homework:

Based on what they saw in the video, teams of students can research which of the plants seen could be grown locally. If anyone in their families grows anything at home, they could ask them, and perhaps get some tips, and maybe some organic seeds. Depending on time, students could write up at least one small 'fact file' about one type of plant. Each group researches a different plant, so that they can then share their findings in class and use the information in the last section when they make their garden boxes. The fact file should include useful information about planting and taking care of the plant, as well as its culinary uses.