



Get creative in the kitchen, inside or outdoors, as you boil, roast, fry or steam these vegetable stones to make soups, stews, salads or stir fries. There will be plenty of opportunities for descriptive language, counting and talking about healthy eating.

Spill the beans

The vegetable stones are beautifully visual and tactile, providing sensory feedback as children feel with their fingers the same details they observe with their eyes. There's plenty to examine and discuss together, building on children's knowledge and understanding of the world:

- You might like to hide the vegetables somewhere intriguing for children to uncover, such as tucked among straw or under a colourful cloth in a basket.
- Ask questions about the stones to develop children's thinking, vocabulary and observation skills. Do the children recognise any of the vegetables? Have they eaten any of them before? Which is their favourite vegetable? What colours and shapes are they? What do the stones feel like? How hard or soft are the vegetables in real life? Do any of them have seeds, leaves, stalks, layers or a skin?
- Compare the vegetable stones with real vegetables. Look at the outside of a vegetable – what do the children think it will look like on the inside? Will it be the same colour or will it feel different? Cut it open and see! Giving children the opportunity to cut soft vegetables such as tomatoes, mushrooms or cucumber under supervision will allow them to learn about knife safety and develop fine motor skills. Can the children find any real seeds?
- Where do these vegetables grow – in the ground, on the ground or on a plant? Show pictures of where the vegetables grow. Have the children ever seen any of these vegetables growing?

In the kitchen

The stones are equally at home in an outdoor mud kitchen and a role-play home corner, with invitations for open-ended creative play:

- In the mud kitchen, as well as a collection of pots, pans and utensils to use with mud and water, offer plenty of natural ingredients such as acorns, bark, fragrant herbs, flowers and dried lentils. Other sensory materials could include corn flour paste, washing up liquid bubbles, water in a spray bottle, ice cubes and coloured rice or pasta.
- In a home corner, children can have the flexibility to role-play cooking, serving or eating the vegetables. You might like to offer cooking utensils, serving dishes, plates and cutlery, as well as a selection of other 'foods'. Children might enjoy adding special touches such as salt shakers (with real salt), flower arrangements (real or artificial), real herbs, and fabric for table mats and runners.





- The vegetables are also ideal for a role-play garden. Putting down some potting soil will allow children to dig easily, planting carrots or any other vegetables they choose. Spades, forks, plant pots, seed packets, kneeling mats and plant labelling sticks will enhance the role play.
- The stones could feature in other open-ended role-play invitations, such as food for soft toy animals, a market stall or supermarket, or a farm.



Veg out

Take the learning into other areas to build children's knowledge and understanding of the world:

- Talk about healthy eating and how our bodies need lots of different fruits and vegetables. One straightforward way to do this is to eat the rainbow – choosing fruit and vegetables in a variety of colours. To illustrate this visually, you might like to create a salad or selection of vegetable sticks in a range of colours. Children might enjoy arranging the vegetable pieces in a rainbow design. Talk about the taste of the different vegetables.
- Make vegetable skewers to cook in an oven, with children threading soft vegetables on the skewer, such as mushrooms, courgettes and bell peppers. How do the vegetables change when we heat them? Do they become softer? Does they taste different? How do the children prefer the vegetables – uncooked or cooked?
- Create a small-world garden so children can invent their own veg tales. As well as potting soil, you could add pebbles to mark out the beds, small plants, small garden tools and mini plant pots made from egg carton cups. You might like to link this to a familiar vegetable-themed story, such as the enormous turnip.
- Do some printing using vegetables with a variety of shapes to create pictures or patterns.



Books about vegetables

Supertato by Sue Hendra

Monsters Don't Eat Broccoli by Barbara Jean Hicks

Mrs. Peanuckle's Vegetable Alphabet by Mrs. Peanuckle

The Runaway Pea by Kjartan Poskitt

Get talking – useful words

Skin, seed, stalk, leaves, layers, root, pod, shell, soft, hard, juicy, crunchy, sweet, slice, chop, peel, cut.