



MODULE 10

Plant parts we eat as vegetables

Teachers' notes

Botanical Definitions

Root: The (normally underground) part of the plant specialised for anchorage, absorption and sometimes food storage.

Stem: The (normally above ground) part of the plant that bears the reproductive parts, leaves and buds.

Leaf: The main photosynthetic organ (food factory) of most green plants, made up of a sideways outgrowth from a stem.

Flower: The reproductive part of the flowering plants. It consists of stamens (that produce pollen containing the male sex cells) and carpels that contain the eggs (called ova – the female sex cells) plus petals and sepals.

Fruit: The structure that develops from the ovary wall as the seeds develop inside.

Seed: The structure that develops from the fertilised egg in seed plants, usually containing one embryo plus a food supply. The seed contains all the components needed for a new plant to grow.

Definition of 'vegetable' – this usually refers to a culinary use, meaning a plant part that we eat, raw or cooked, as a savoury food. The plant parts listed in the table below are ALL vegetables. Some are fruits in the botanical sense – so it is true that some vegetables can also be 'fruits'!

Definition of a 'fruit' in the culinary sense – this refers to plant part that we use, raw or cooked, as a dessert. Fruits are usually 'sweet'. They also, as it happens, are mostly 'botanical' fruits, i.e. the structures containing seeds, e.g. cherries, pears, apricots etc. Some things we eat as fruits are not actually fruits in the botanical sense. Strawberries are swollen bases to the flower part and the little 'pips' on them are the fruits – inside each pip is an inner seed. Pineapples are made up of many multiple fruits squashed closely together - as are blackberries, raspberries etc.

Parts of a plant	Examples
Roots	Carrots, parsnips, celeriac
Stems	Celery, potato (underground storage stem or tuber) Fennel (may also have leaves attached)
Leaves	Cabbage, spinach (may also have stem attached) Coriander (may also have stem attached) Parsley (may also have stem attached) Chard (will also have stem attached)
Flowers	Cauliflower, broccoli (both flowers in bud)
Fruits - all containing seeds	Tomato, sweet pepper, chilli, aubergine, courgette, pumpkin (and other squashes), pea pods (individual pea is a seed), bean pods (individual bean is a seed), physalis (Cape gooseberry), cucumber, gherkin, mangetout (pea pod)