

HAYES FARM TRAVELLING GARDEN TOOL KIT

THE THREE SISTERS AND INDIGENOUS GARDENING

KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 2



Today we will learn about

The story of the Three Sisters

What companion planting is

How to plant a Three Sisters Garden

Arctic Islands



Mexico

This story comes to us from the Indigenous (First) People

Indigenous People lived in the place that some of us call North America, but they called it Turtle Island.



Photos: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Google Maps



The Story of the Three Sisters

There was a time, a long time ago, when no rain came. The plants didn't grow and people were hungry.

The people asked The Creator to "Please make the rain come!"

The Creator said, "I will help you, but you must prove that you are serious."

Three Sisters came forward and said that together they would help everyone.



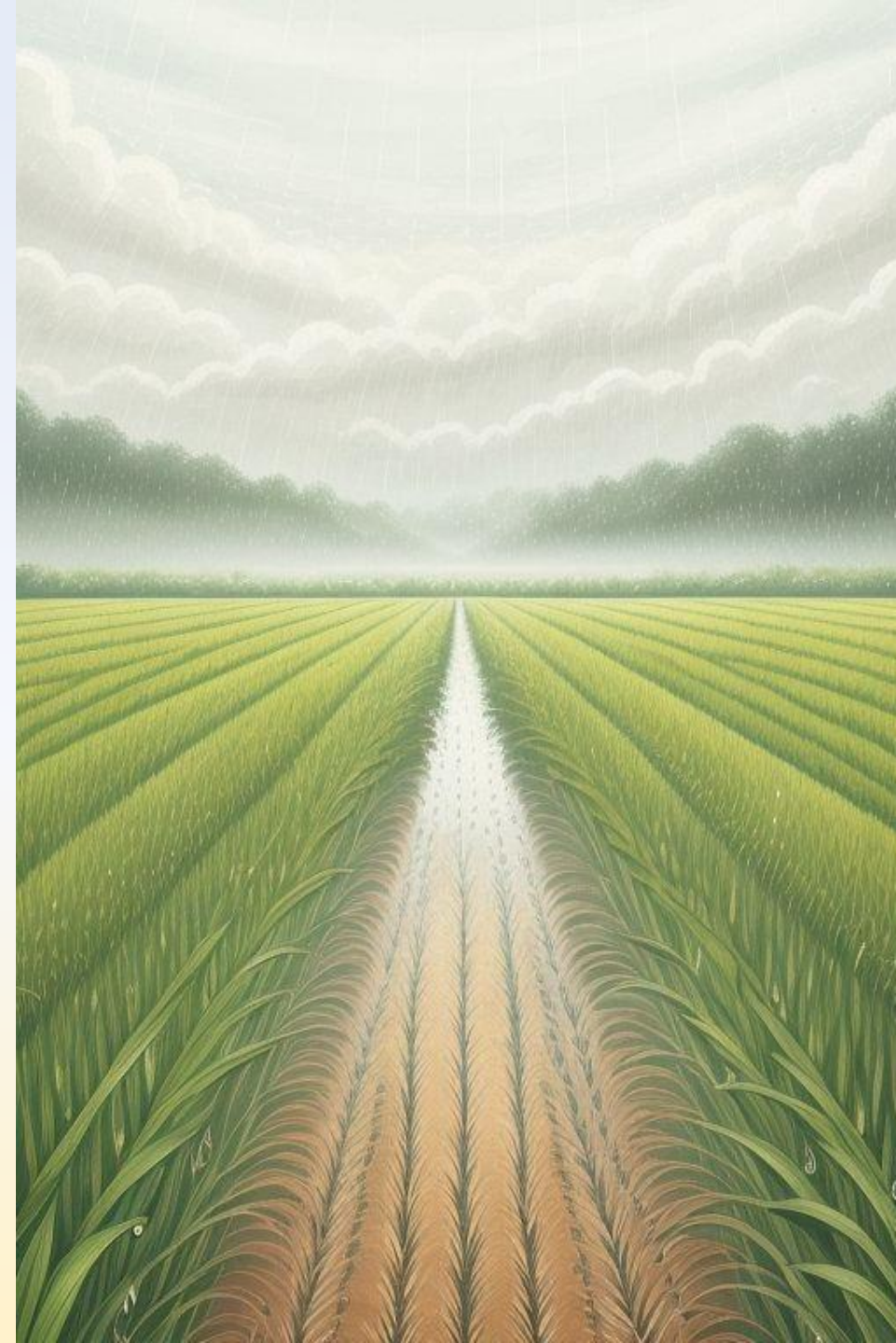
The oldest sister was tall and strong, she supported her younger sisters. She became corn.

The middle sister was very generous, she made food for her other sisters by taking nutrients from the air and putting them into the soil. She became beans.

The youngest sister was very protective. She gave the ground under her older sister shade to hold water. She became squash.

The Creator was so happy to see the sisters come to save the people that rain came down and everyone had food again.

Today we plant the Three Sisters together because they always want to work together to help the people. They remind us that we can help people too.



How *exactly* do the three sisters work together?



Photo: theallotmentgarden.co.uk

Corn is quite strong, especially traditional types of corn. Corn likes heat and sun, but it can dry out quite fast and get weeds underneath. The corn builds the “ladder” for the beans.

Beans take a nutrient/ food called Nitrogen from the air. They take this to make food for the beans, the corn and the squash. Beans need to climb. If they grow on the ground they often get too wet and mouldy, so they climb corn like a ladder. They love the air!

Squash also likes sun and heat. Since the corn grows up straight it doesn't make too much shade for squash. The squash captures sunlight, and shades the ground. When the ground is shaded it stays wet longer and there are less weeds.

Altogether, the Sisters make what we call *companion planting*.

Companion planting

Another word for *companion* is friend, and friends work together.

Each companion provides a function that helps it's friends.

Here is another example:

If you plant lettuce underneath tomato plants

1. the tomato will lend shade which helps the lettuce stay cooler. Lettuce doesn't grow well in the hot sun or on dry ground.
2. The lettuce will keep moisture in the soil and steal sunlight away from weeds.

The Other Sisters and Brothers

The family can sometimes grow even bigger!
There are some other plants that serve similar structural functions that can be companions.

A tall plant that supports vines like corn does is the **Sunflower**. The seeds can be eaten or provide a healthy oil when pressed.

Photo: Amy Floyd





Photo: Amy Floyd

Jerusalem Artichokes

Also called J-chokes or sunchokes have a tuber under the ground (like a potato) that can be eaten.

They are in the sunflower family.

Unlike the sunflowers that we are used to, they grow naturally in New Brunswick.

These sunchokes are growing on the Wolastoq River near Grand Falls.



Photo: The Spruce (only_Fabrizio)

Ground cherries

Ground cover plants shade the soil and keep it moist.

Ground cherries are like a tasty yellow cherry wrapped up in a little package! These fruits are annual, so they need to be planted each year. The seeds are tiny and sometimes they will self-seed. They are a sweet treat.



Photo: Incredible Seed Company

Activity

Let's make some seed pouches!

1. We will fold wax paper and staple it together to make a bag to hold seeds
2. Each bags gets:
 - 4 corn seeds
 - 6 bean seeds
 - 2 squash seeds
3. We will put a sticker to label seed kit and hold bag shut
4. We will get a sheet about how to grow the Three Sisters garden and how to make Three Sisters Soup to take home to our family.

Additional Resources:

How to get your space ready for a Three Sisters Garden

It is okay if you only have a small space to start with. You can use seeds or seedlings that you start in the classroom to speed the process up.

1. In spring, prepare the soil by weeding, and by adding fish scraps (traditional) or compost to increase fertility.
2. Make a mound of soil about 30 cm high and 125 cm in diameter. Additional mounds can be made at about 1.5 meters from the center of each mound.
3. Plant 3-5 corn seeds in a circle in the center (or sunflowers). When corn is about 10 cm tall, plant 4-6 pole bean seeds around the corn plants.
 - Plant 2-3 squash seeds or plants around the edge of the mound, evenly spaced. Train squash to vine away from the corn and beans to fill in all spaces. Squash will need a good amount of heat and water to take off