



Welcome!

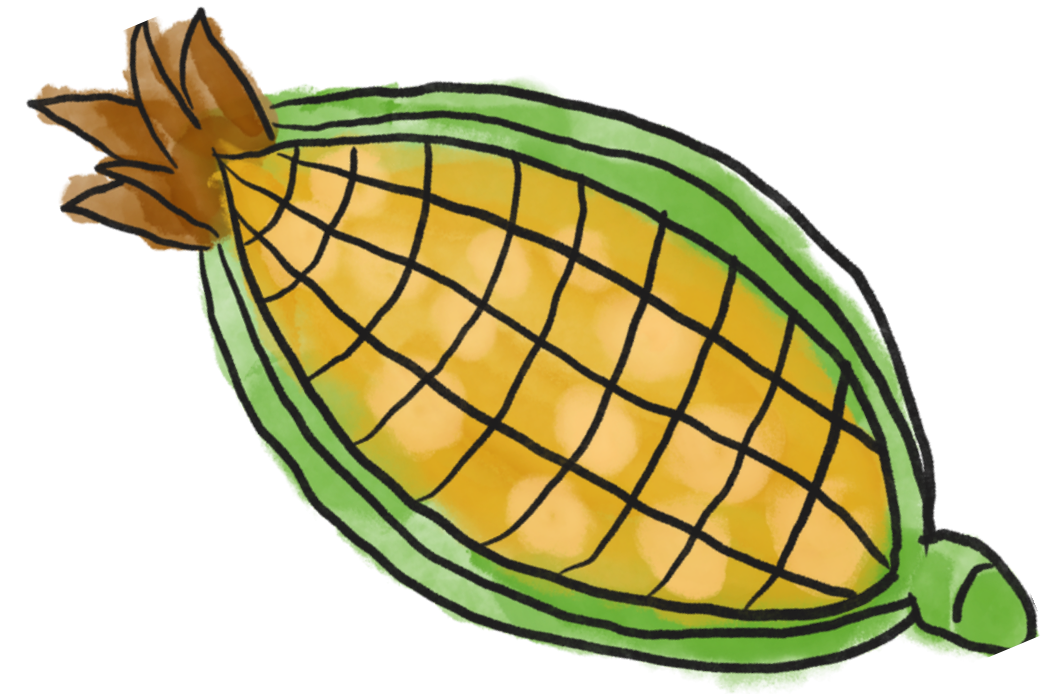
Preserving the Harvest

Week 8

Week 8: Preserving the Harvest

Program Focus:

- Explore how preserving specialty crops creates access to fresh, healthy food year-round.
- Learn different preservation methods like freezing, canning, drying, pickling, fermenting, salting, smoking, and seed saving.
- Connect lessons from the past seven weeks about specialty crops, seasonality, and agriculture.



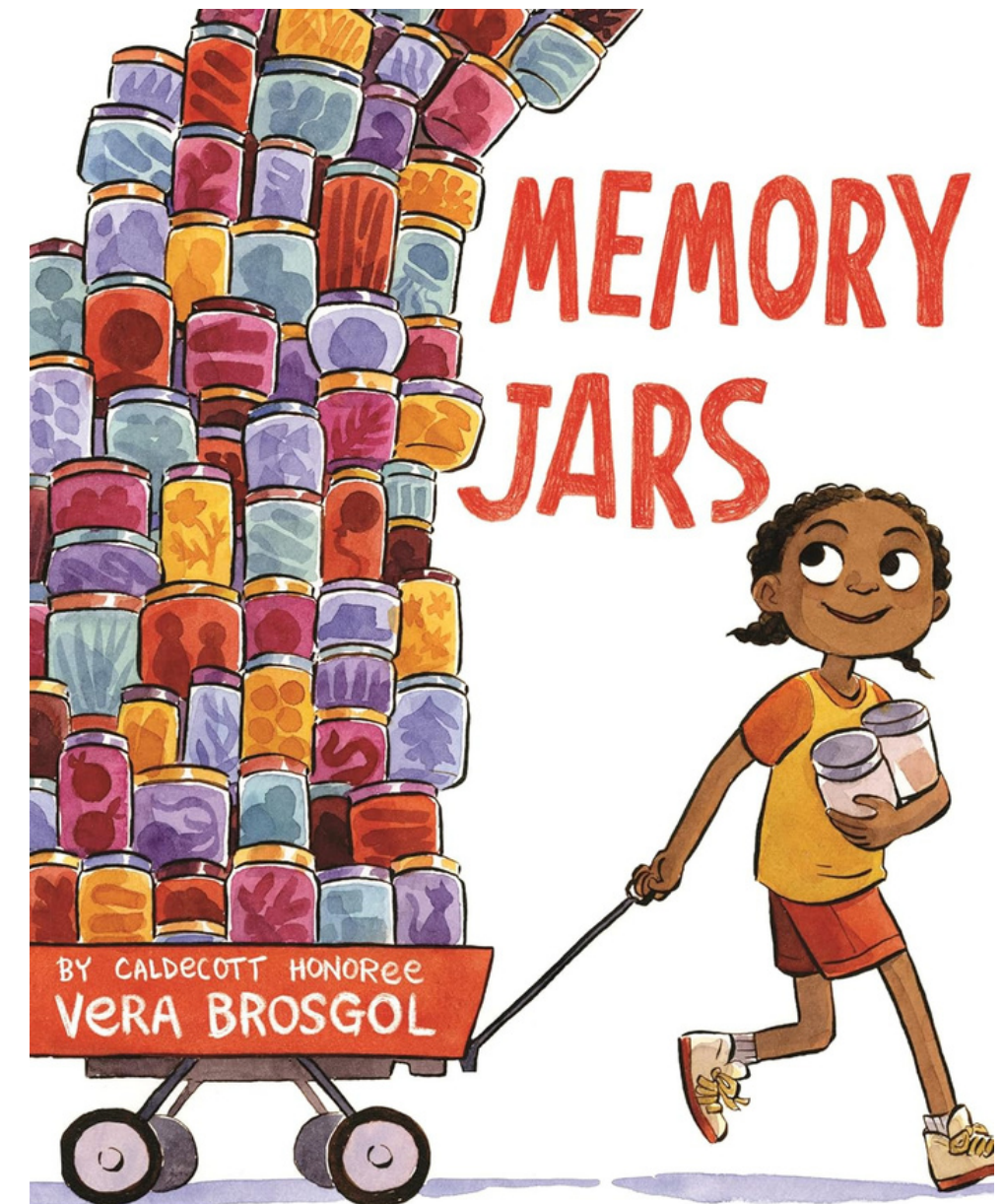
Sweet corn is a warm-season specialty crop in West Virginia valued for its sweet, milky kernels in yellow, white, or bicolor varieties



Book of the Week:

Memory Jars By: Vera Brosgol

A fun and engaging story about a girl named Freda who wants to save the blueberries she picked, learning from her Gran how to preserve them as jam while discovering the value of saving food and special memories.





Story Discussion

- Why was Freda worried about the blueberries going bad?
- How did Gran show Freda a way to save the harvest?
- What does Freda learn about preserving food vs. enjoying it now?
- How does this story connect to real-life ways we preserve specialty crops?

Week 8: Preserving the Harvest

Specialty Crops Review

Past Program Focus – Connecting Week 1-7:

- Students learned how specialty crops, nutrition, seasonality, and local agriculture all work together to grow the fruits, vegetables, herbs, and nuts we eat.
- We explored the roles of farmers, gardens, and communities in producing healthy foods, supporting the environment, and understanding how food systems work.

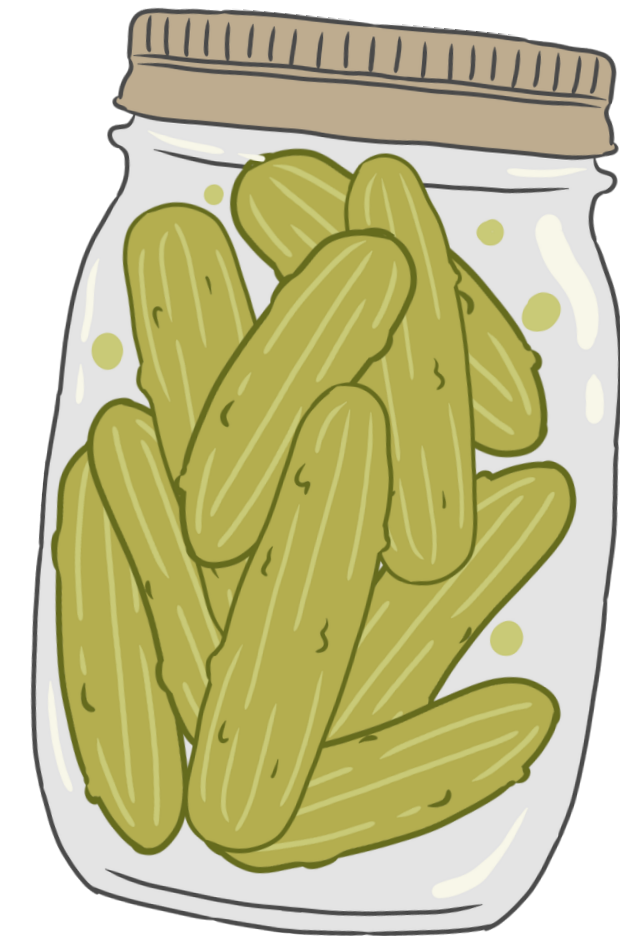
Week 8 Program Focus:

- Exploring specialty crops through preserving the harvest, reviewing what we've learned, and playing Specialty Crop Bingo to connect lessons to real-world ways to enjoy and save crops year-round.



Food Preservation Overview

- Freezing – Food is kept very cold to slow spoilage. Fruits and vegetables like berries and peppers can be frozen and used later in meals or smoothies.
- Canning – Food is sealed in jars and heated to kill germs. This allows foods like tomatoes, jams, and vegetables to be stored safely for months.
- Drying – Water is removed from foods so they last longer. Herbs, fruits, beans, and corn are often dried.
- Pickling – Foods are soaked in vinegar or salty water (brine) to keep them from spoiling. Cucumbers, peppers, and green beans are common pickled foods.



Canning preserves food for months. Fruits can be canned in boiling water, but vegetables and meat need a pressure canner to be safe.

Food Preservation Overview

- Fermenting – Helpful bacteria change the food and help preserve it while creating new flavors, like fermented vegetables.
- Salting & Smoking – Salt removes moisture and smoke helps protect food, allowing it to last longer.
- Seed Saving – Seeds are saved from crops and planted later to grow new plants next season. It also protects unique flavors, and help plants adapt to your local soil and climate.



Seeds like beans, lettuce, and tomatoes, can stay good for 4–10 years when stored in a cool, dry place.

Week 8 Activity: Seed Exchange

Activity Focus:

- Label and share seeds (vegetables, herbs, flowers) with peers.
- Learn planting tips and how saving seeds supports future harvests.
- Explore connections to seasonality and preserving specialty crops.
- Discuss sustainability, community sharing, and ways to enjoy crops year-round.



Artichokes are a valuable specialty crop grown for their tasty, nutty hearts and tender leaves in West Virginia.

Connecting Specialty Crops to Local Food Systems

- Preserving specialty crops helps reduce food waste and keeps seasonal foods available year-round.
- Seed saving and preservation help maintain traditional practices and cultural knowledge.
- Buying and supporting local farms strengthens community food systems.
- Thinking about how we can preserve foods at home helps us connect to agriculture and enjoy healthy crops year-round.

Reflection Questions:

- Why is preserving specialty crops important for reducing food waste?
- How does seed saving help farmers and communities grow crops in the future?
- What are some ways you could preserve fruits or vegetables at home?
- How does supporting local farms help your community?