



**Welcome!**

**Specialty Crop Showcase**

**Week 3**

# Week 3: Specialty Crop Showcase

## Program Focus:

- Learn more about specialty crops and how they grow in West Virginia.
- Explore how specialty crops are used in everyday meals.
- Taste and enjoy fresh specialty crops in a fun specialty crop tasting activity.
- Connect what we learned about seeds, farms, and farmers' markets in previous lessons to the real foods we eat every day.



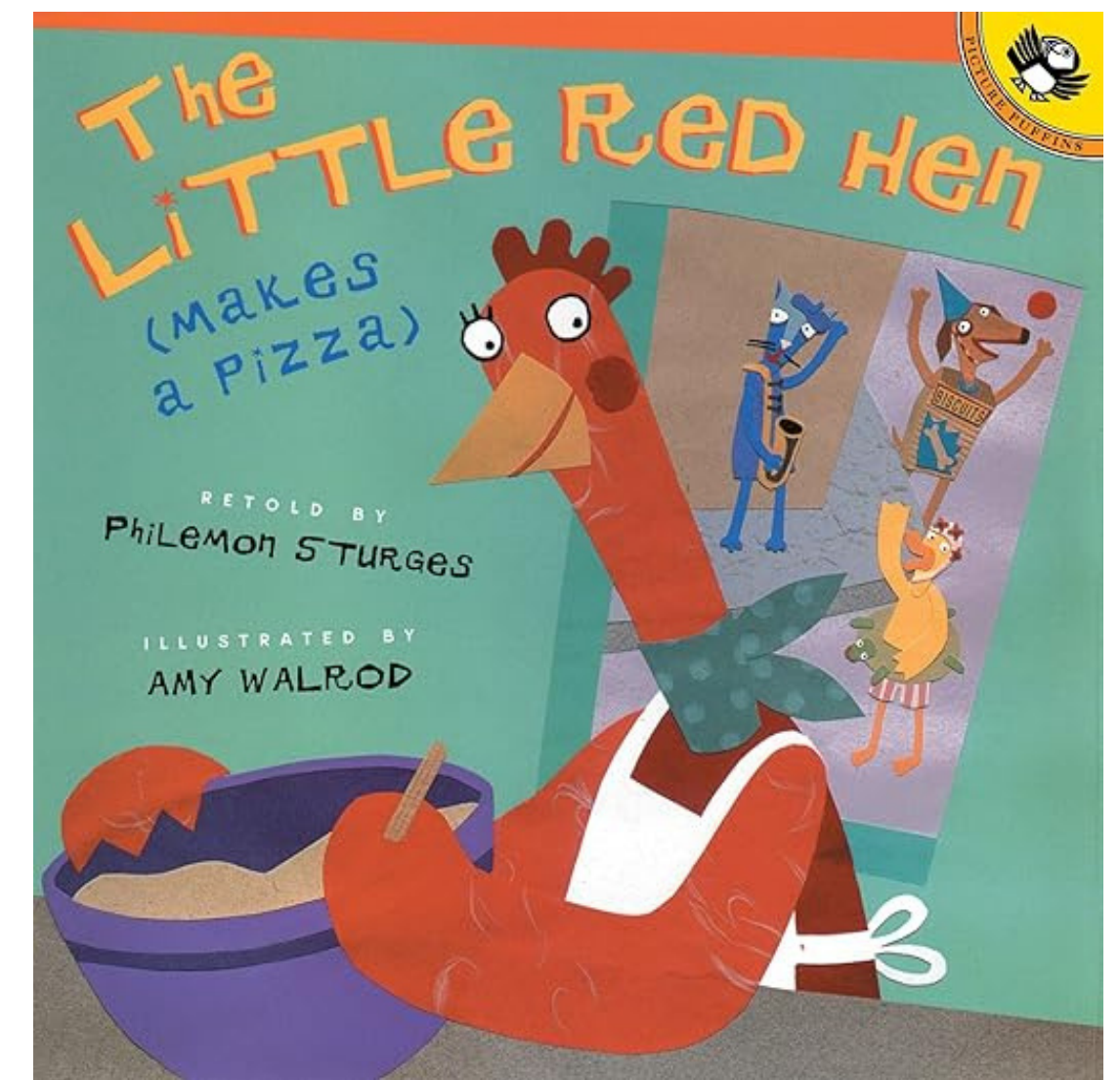
Asparagus is a specialty crop in West Virginia that can grow for 15+ years. In warm weather, spears can grow up to 7 inches in one day!



## Book of the Week:

### The Little Red Hen Makes a Pizza By: Philomen Sturges

The Little Red Hen Makes a Pizza shows how the Little Red Hen goes through each step of making a pizza, from shopping for ingredients to preparing the dough and adding toppings. The story highlights how her friends, the duck, dog, and cat, initially don't help but eventually join in, teaching about teamwork, sharing, and the fun of preparing food together.





## Story Discussion

- What vegetables or ingredients did the Little Red Hen use to make pizza?
- Where do these foods come from before they reach the kitchen?
- Why is it important to use fresh fruits and vegetables in meals?
- Have you ever helped make a meal with fresh produce?

# Why Do Specialty Crops Matter?

- Specialty crops are important because they grow right here in West Virginia and provide us with fresh, healthy, and tasty foods.
- Farmers grow these crops, and chefs and restaurants use them to make meals like vegetable pizzas that we can enjoy.
- By tasting fruits, vegetables, and herbs, we see how the food we eat starts from seeds and is cared for on farms.
- Specialty crops also connect farms, farmers markets, and our communities, showing how agriculture brings real, fresh food to our tables.



Pumpkins are a well-loved specialty crop in West Virginia, particularly the Connecticut Field variety, which is perfect for carving and packed with antioxidants.

# Specialty Crops in Cooking

Many pizza ingredients come from specialty crops like vegetables and herbs!

Popular specialty crops used in pizza:

- Tomatoes – for sauce and flavor
- Bell peppers & onions – add crunch and color
- Basil, parsley, and other herbs – for aroma and taste
- Garlic & spinach – healthy, flavorful additions



Radishes are a fast-growing specialty crop in West Virginia, ready to harvest in just 25–30 days!

# Popular Specialty Crops in West Virginia

A wide variety of specialty crops are grown in West Virginia that are fresh, nutritious, and full of flavor. These crops are often sold at farmers markets, local restaurants, and used in home meals. Some popular specialty crops include:

- Herbs – basil, parsley, cilantro, and more; used to add flavor, aroma, and nutrition to meals.
- Squash – versatile vegetables that can be roasted, grilled, or added to soups and casseroles.
- Berries – strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries; great for snacks, desserts, jams, and smoothies.
- Apples – enjoyed fresh, baked in pies, or made into cider; a classic West Virginia specialty.



Broccoli is a specialty crop in West Virginia that grows well in spring and fall, is full of vitamin C, and keeps producing side shoots after the main head is harvested.

# Week 3 Activity:

## Specialty Crop Tasting & Pizza Party

### Activity Focus:

- Introduce participants to a variety of specialty crops grown in West Virginia and discuss what makes each one unique.
- Provide small tasting portions so participants can sample and explore new flavors.
- Encourage students to describe the taste, texture, and appearance of each crop.
- Pizza Party: Enjoy vegetable pizzas featuring specialty crops, showing how fresh ingredients are used in meals.



Without agriculture, there is no pizza! The crust comes from wheat, the sauce from tomatoes, the cheese from milk (usually cows), and the toppings can include meats like pork or beef and veggies like mushrooms, peppers, and onions.

# Connecting Specialty Crops to Everyday Meals

- Specialty crops provide fresh, flavorful, and nutritious ingredients for the foods we eat every day.
- They help support local farmers and communities, keeping our food systems strong and sustainable.
- Using specialty crops in meals, like salads, sauces, and vegetable pizzas, connects what we eat to how food is grown.
- Learning about these crops shows how farmers, markets, and kitchens work together to bring healthy, local foods to our tables.

## Reflection Questions:

- Which specialty crop that you tried today would you like to eat at home, and why?
- How do specialty crops grown in West Virginia make meals tastier and more nutritious?
- Why is it important to support local farmers who grow specialty crops?
- How does learning about specialty crops help you understand where your food comes from and how it reaches your plate?

