

Native American Heritage Day in a Box

Plant Your Own Seeds

The Three Sisters

By the time European settlers arrived in America in the early 1600s, the Iroquois had been growing the “three sisters” for over three centuries. The vegetable trio, **Corn, Beans, and Squash**, sustained the Native Americans both physically and spiritually. In legend, the plants were a gift from the gods, always to be grown together, eaten together, and celebrated together.

Each of the sisters contributes something to the planting. Together, the sisters provide a balanced diet from a single planting.

- As older sisters often do, the **corn** offers the beans the necessary support.
- The pole **beans**, the giving sister, pull nitrogen from the air and bring it to the soil for the benefit of all three. As the beans grow through the tangle of squash vines and wind their way up the cornstalks into the sunlight, they hold the sisters close together.
- The large leaves of the sprawling **squash** protect the threesome by creating living mulch that shades the soil, keeping it cool and moist and preventing weeds. The prickly squash leaves also keep away raccoons and other pests, which don't like to step on them.

Planting your Squash

- Fill your green cup almost to the top with soil.
- Teachers should distribute one seed per student.
- Push your squash seed down two inches into the cup.
- Water your cup until the soil is moist.
- Keep your cup in a sunny place, like a window sill.
- Water your cup every other day or when it starts to look dry on top.
- Seedlings should appear in about one week.

Teachers will have a few extra seeds for students in case any planted seeds fail to germinate.

Remember that seeing results takes time! Your patience will be rewarded with your own fresh squash.

When your seedling grows a few inches tall, you can plant your cup into the ground with the help of a parent or guardian.

