

# YELLOW FARMHOUSE

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## EDUCATION CENTER

### Spring Classroom Connection

**Title:** *The Importance of Native Plants*

**Duration:** 55 minutes

### Objectives:

- Students will be introduced to the concept of native & non-native species.
- Students will learn about how some non-native plants came to the United States.
- Students will consider how native plants contribute to animal, soil, and climate health.

### Materials:

- YFH Spring Video
- [Native Plants Slide Deck](#)
- Blank paper and pencils for sketching
- Traditional Narragansett story: [Strawberry Thanksgiving by Paulla Dove Jennings](#)

### Key Terms/Concepts:

- **Native species:** A plant, animal, or fungus that has been growing and evolving naturally (without human intervention) in a habitat or region for thousands of years (or longer).
- **Food chain:** An arrangement of the organisms of an ecological community according to the order of predation in which each uses the next usually lower member as a food source.
- **Food web:** The totality of interacting food chains in an ecological community.
- **Pollinator:** An organism, such as an insect or bird, that pollinates a flower.
- **Host plant:** A plant upon which an organism (such as an insect or mildew) lodges and subsists.

### PROCEDURE

*Introduction (5 minutes):* Explain to students that just as people have moved around the world throughout history, plants and animals have moved (or have been moved by people) around the world as well. All of these activities have had an impact on the natural world.

*Mini Lesson (25 minutes):* Review the “Native Plants” slide deck with students. While it is not important for them to have a nuanced understanding of these concepts, a key takeaway is that native plants are critical to local food webs.

*Story & Sketching (20 minutes):* Explain to students that, in addition to their important role in food webs, native plants (and animals) often have cultural significance for the indigenous people that have lived alongside them for thousands of years. The Narragansett Indian Tribe is indigenous to what is now known as the state of Rhode Island. Their culture celebrates many native plants that are also found in Connecticut, whose name comes from the Native word *Quinnetukut*, though the Native word refers more directly to the river than to the land surrounding it.

Today we’re going to listen to a Narragansett story called [Strawberry Thanksgiving](#) (story begins @ 10:48 - 18:40). It focuses on a traditional spring food in this region: strawberries. As you listen to the story, you can sketch what comes to mind on your blank piece of paper. When the story is over, invite students to share what they drew.

*Closing (5 minutes):* Explain to students that strawberries are an important late spring/early summer food in the Narragansett culture. Ask them what foods their families enjoy at this time of the year? Why are they special?