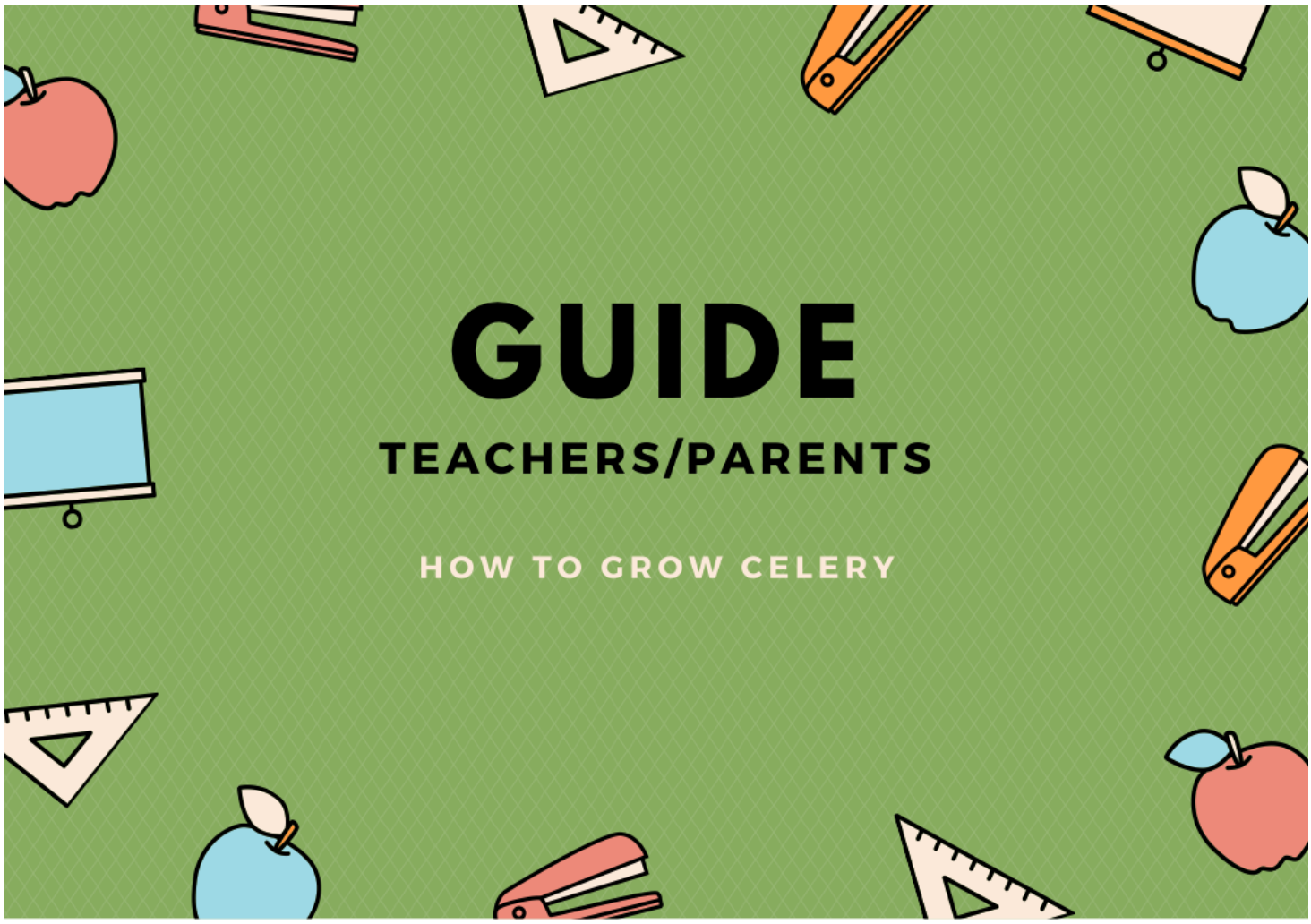
JOSEPH P CORY
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A Note from our MD/MPH student Anika Jain…



Dear Parents, Guardians, Teachers and Students,

I trust you are staying safe and healthy. Boosting our immune system and eating well, will certainly aid in protecting ourselves now and in the future.

Fresh foods are important for nourishing our bodies, and packed with the vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients we need to thrive and flourish. By putting good foods into our bodies, and making good food choices, we can improve our health, increase our energy levels, and even boost our moods.

While there are many factors that go into health, nutrition remains a key player in one's overall well-being. Establishing healthy habits early in life will help set children up to live balanced lives as adolescents and adults. Furthermore, as children grow older, they also gain more autonomy in making beneficial food choices. Educating students about proper nutrition, through hands-on experience, will empower them to consume and enjoy healthy foods throughout the years, thereby creating optimal health and well-being.

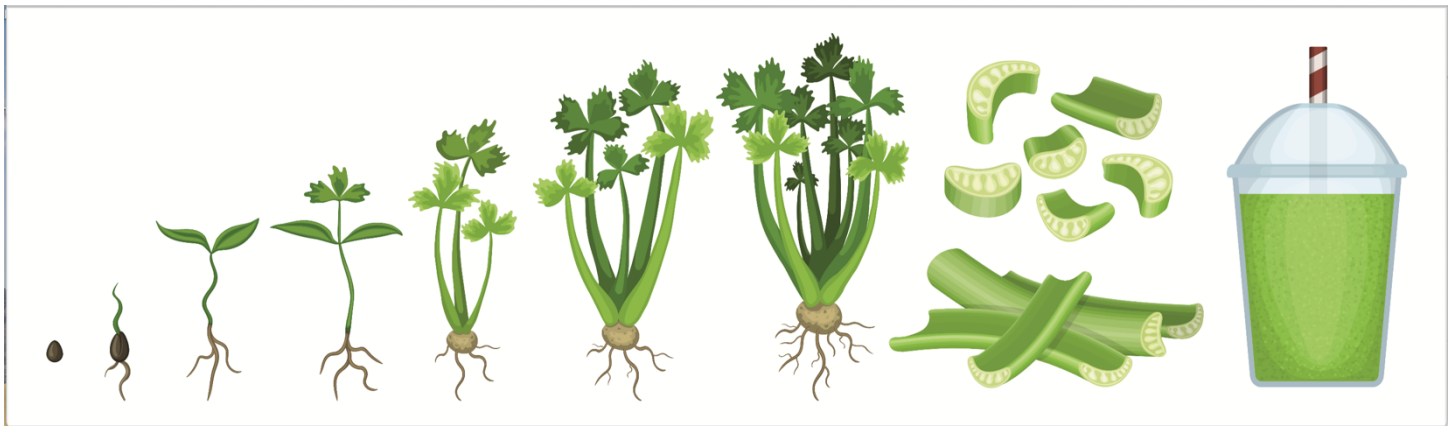
We are fortunate to have at our disposal, many places to get fresh foods, however, one of the most exciting ways to procure them, is to *grow fruits and vegetables in your own garden*! By planting seeds, tending to your plants, and finally, enjoying your harvest, you know exactly what is in your food, and how it was grown.

The attached celery lesson takes you on a journey from garden to table, and we look forward to your participation and the exciting results that will unfold: Mind – Body – Spirit!

Sincerely,

Anika Jain
University of Miami Miller School of Medicine 3rd year MD/MPH Student
Joseph P Cory Foundation lead researcher and project coordinator for Gardens of Hope

Celery Growth Chart from a Seed



What an amazing feeling it is to put a tiny seed in the ground, and watch it grow! Such pride and happiness, as you watch that tiny little seed poke its head out of the soil for the first time. As it pushes its strong roots down, and holds it head up high, you will share in this marvelous life cycle. Congratulations, you are a Gardener!

The chart above shows pictures of celery during a growth cycle. It takes approximately three to four months for a full plant to mature from seed to harvest!

You can start growing celery from seeds indoors using egg cartons, cups, flats, or whatever container you like, or plant them directly into the soil. You can also grow and regrow celery, by using the top (root) of an entire stalk. It is a gift that keeps on giving! (You will find instructions for growing celery from the root within this kit)



Days 1-14: Seeds will start to germinate (grow) and emerge from the soil. It is a good idea to make sure plants are about 6-12 inches apart from one another. In Florida, the best time to start growing is after the intense summer heat has left. October or later.



Weeks 10-12: Plants are about 6 inches tall. The soil must stay watered at all times. Celery is a heavy feeder and needs to be “fed” during its growth period.



Months 3-4: Plants are ready to harvest. Now you can enjoy them in your favorite recipes.

The celery has several parts. The entire plant is called a stalk of celery. The base, or bottom is the root. The top of the plant has the leaves. All parts of the plant can be eaten.

Celery Growth Chart/Video for Growing Celery by “Root” Cutting

Here is a timeline of what you can expect when growing your celery from the root. The most successful variety of celery is a plant that has already been grown and harvested in our area, as it is used to the soil and weather conditions.



Day 1: Cut the celery top off, as explained in the video and place it in the glass with water. Keep it watered at all times.

Days 2-6: It will start to grow from the center.

Day 7: It is ready to be planted outside. Watch Video





Month 2: Celery growing from the root center, approximately 6” high.

Months 3-4: If you give your celery plenty of water and treat it to some nice “food”, you will be able to harvest a full-grown stalk. You can regrow this celery as well, by repeating the process. The gift that keeps on giving”!

Gardens of Hope Teacher’s Growing Guide for Celery Projects

Dear Garden Gurus,

Here are some tips to make your celery project successful. While it is not the easiest vegetable to grow, it is fascinating to watch, yields a great snack, and has lots of benefits. You may want to use the "grow from the root" method, which is also fun and a good project to start indoors.

Soil Preparation (from seed)

- Select a site that receives full direct sunlight.
- Loosen the soil to a depth of 12 to 15 inches with a garden fork or tiller. Recommended… Mix 2 to 4 inches of compost into the soil. (Or, work in some 5-10-10 natural) fertilizer. The soil should retain moisture, bordering on wet, but still draining.
- Celery prefers a soil with a pH between 5.8 and 6.8. Get a soil test if you're not sure of your soil pH.

Starting Seeds

- Due to a long growing season, it's best to start celery seeds indoors. This is especially true for our Florida gardens, when the intense heat lingers way into early Fall. This is a great kick-off for students, who can easily start seeds in the classroom. Encourage students to bring in egg cartons to jump start the project.
- Before planting, soak seeds in warm water overnight. This will speed germination.
- Press soaked seeds into seed-starting soil; to get good germination, do not cover with soil.
- Cover starter trays/pots with plastic wrap to retain moisture. Germination should occur in about a week.
- Soon after seedlings appear, if possible, place a fluorescent grow light 3 inches above them for 16 hours a day (plants need dark, too).
- Maintain an ambient temperature of 70° to 75°F during the day and 60° to 65°F at night.
- Mist regularly
- When seedlings are 2 inches tall, transplant them to individual peat pots or to deeper flats with new potting soil. In flats, set the plants at least 2 inches apart.
- Harden off (allow plants to get used to their new "turf") seedlings before transplanting, by reducing water slightly and putting them outdoors for a couple of hours each day. Tough love, but necessary for our Florida dry spells.

Transplant in the Ground

- Plant celery outdoors when the soil temperature reaches at least 50°F and nighttime temperatures don't dip down below 40°F. (Cold weather after planting can cause bolting.)
- Work organic compost into the soil prior to planting, or mix in fertilizer (about one pound of 5-10-10 per 30 square feet).
- Plant seedlings 8 to 10 inches apart.
- Water thoroughly.

Harvesting

After about 3-4 months, when the lower stalks are about 6 inchers long, from the ground to the first node.